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## **Transcending Temporality**

### **a Study of the Reception of Julius Caesar's Self-representation in Epic and Drama**

Dimitrova, Miryana

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**Transcending Temporality – a Study of the Reception of  
Julius Caesar’s Self-representation in Epic and Drama**

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## Abstract

The aim of the thesis is to establish a sense of continuity in the development and transmutation of the character of Julius Caesar from history to epic and drama. The research question is: what elements from Caesar's self-representation, constituting themes and characterization, have been transmitted to his epic and dramatic representation?

The groundwork of my study is formed by an analysis of Caesar's self-representation in his *Commentaries* on the Gallic and Civil Wars as fundamental for the establishment of his specific epic-dramatic image. Epic Caesar is characterized by exceptional speed, leading to his transcendence of ordinary temporality; this supernatural asset distinguishes him as a certain quasi-divine presence. Caesar's dramatic aspect is expressed in the heightened sense of self-dramatization achieved by the self-referential use of the third person, the utilization of dramaturgical techniques and by highlighting the performativity of war and the gaze of the commander. The fusion of author and protagonist exemplified in Caesar's works allows their assessment both on a level internal to the narrative, and on an external, or meta-level, as part of the author's political and personal propaganda.

A chapter on ancient historiography, focusing primarily on events not described in the *Commentaries*, explores the development of Caesar's epic-dramatic character in the light of his dramatization by the historical canon and the Late Republican performative milieu.

One epic (Lucan's *Civil War*) and three dramatic case studies (Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, George Chapman's *The Tragedy of Caesar and Pompey* and Bernard Shaw's *Caesar and Cleopatra*) are investigated in the light of the set of qualities, identified as intrinsic to Caesar's agenda set in his own works. By drawing parallels between Caesarean self-characterization and its interpretation by the dramatists I aim to elucidate the *Commentaries'* potential for thematic influence, created by the unique blending of author and protagonist.

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## Introduction

Julius Caesar (100-44 BC) played a decisive role in shaping of the geo-political and cultural map of Europe, his intellectual brilliance an epitome of Roman imperial worldview. Caesar's persona is enigmatic, contradictory and has provoked the imagination of historians and artists for two thousand years: charismatic leader, devious politician, womanizer, he is also a symbol of autocracy and personifies the sea change in Roman history – the transition from Republic to Empire. Though never fully liberated from his aura of political allegory, Caesar nevertheless enjoys an exciting modern afterlife: students of Latin are introduced to the language through his lucid narratives and fans of comic books revel in the ironic historicity of his character in Goscinny and Uderzo's *Asterix*. It is not an overstatement to claim that Caesar has acquired universal popularity, which renders impossible the task to attempt to describe all aspects of his multifaceted persona.

The ambivalence of Caesar's character is rooted in his controversial career, which demonstrates extraordinary charisma and capacity for command. By recognizing both negative and positive traits in Caesar's character and conduct, ancient historiography contributed to the creation of the general's enigmatic aura and encouraged interpretations from different political perspectives. Caesar was popular in medieval times: *Li Fet des Romains*, a thirteenth-century fusion of various ancient accounts, focuses on his life; a symbol of chivalry and prowess, the Roman general featured in the collection of perfect warriors, the 'Nine Worthies', together with Alexander and Hector. With the rising of Renaissance humanism, Caesar appeared in discussions comparing political systems, as

well as personally inspiring representatives of powerful Italian families.<sup>1</sup> The emergence of the term ‘Caesarism’, related to Napoleonic power, created another layer of appropriated historical exempla and political references. Notably, Caesar was hailed by Theodor Mommsen in his monumental *Römische Geschichte* as the most successful of all Romans.<sup>2</sup>

The crucial role played by Caesar has become part of a tradition of evaluating European systems of government in terms of their Roman predecessors. In the twentieth century, specific aspects of Caesar’s politics were often highlighted to serve a particular agenda, such as Fascism, seeking ideological justification in Roman imperial power. A striking instance of Mussolini’s desire to associate the new order with Caesarean imperialism is the play *Cesare* (1939) by Giovacchino Forzano, in which the speeches of Caesar are modelled on those of the Duce himself.<sup>3</sup> This characterization of Caesar, deformed by propaganda, yet poignant, exemplifies the importance of Caesarean dramatic afterlife.

Caesar’s life and importantly his death possess great dramatic potential, utilized by numerous playwrights from the Renaissance onwards.<sup>4</sup> In one of the most influential dramatizations, William Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*, the assassination of the dictator has been interpreted as depicting the complexities of authoritarian government as well as

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<sup>1</sup> On the ‘Nine Worthies’, see Suerbaum (2009: 332) and Wyke (2007: 11-12); on the medieval reception and mythologization of Caesar, see Wyke (2007: 8-16); on *Li Fet des Romains*, see Beer (1976); on the Renaissance popularity of Caesar, particularly in Italy, see Clark (2009), McLaughlin (2009), Temple (2006); on Cesare Borgia – Wyke (2007: 76-9; 143-4).

<sup>2</sup> ‘Caesarism’, the concept developed by Auguste Romieu in 1850, is discussed by Wyke (2007: 156,159). Mommsen’s *Römische Geschichte* was published in 1854-6; book 5 is dedicated to Caesar and the Civil War.

<sup>3</sup> On the Forzano play, see Dunnett (2006).

<sup>4</sup> An excellent concise discussion on Caesar as subject in Early Modern drama is offered by Chernaik (2011:87-92); see also Griffin (2009:371-399); a relatively little known twentieth-century example is *Die Verschwörung* (1974). Written by Walter Jens, a prominent classical scholar, and inspired by speculations found in classical sources, it depicts Caesar’s assassination as consciously provoked by Caesar himself, who feels the need for a highly dramatic end.

the moral dilemmas of defenders of liberty. Shakespeare's play is unique, because it represents a new strand in Caesarean tradition; in fact, it has become the true 'evil genius' of historical Gaius Caesar, whose reception is often obliged to dispel assumptions that arise from the play.

## **Unexplored areas and research question**

Modern scholarship evaluates Caesar's cultural importance in specialized areas, such as political theory or military history, and in ever-growing numbers of biographies. Caesar's existence as a fictional character, and particularly as a dramatic persona, is discussed in equally specialized studies in the dramatic field, and consequently often appears disconnected from the evaluation of Caesar historically. In a sense, the chasm between Caesar of the Late Republic and Caesar as artistic representation reflects a debate in the field of classical reception, namely the tension between tradition and reception.<sup>5</sup> Caesarean tradition, sustained by biographical and historical research, presents Caesar as an ambivalent personality, whose career has inspired a tradition of thinking about 'Caesar' in symbolic terms. However, this tradition largely excludes the consideration of different media as means of interpreting the character and therefore obstructs his passage from history to fiction. Therefore, it is my view that both the fields of theatre studies and classical reception would benefit from the establishment of an interface between Caesarean tradition and Caesarean dramatic reception. I have identified two areas, the investigation of which may contribute to the creation of such interface.

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<sup>5</sup> Discussed by Budelmann and Haubold (2008).



The first area concerns the reception of themes and characterization in Caesar's *Commentaries* as possible sources for his subsequent reception. The Caesarean corpus consists of seven books on the Gallic Wars (58-52 BC), plus an additional book (describing events in 51 BC) added by Caesar's associate Hirtius. The three books of the *Commentaries* on the Civil war cover the period between Caesar's invasion of Italy and end, abruptly, with the beginning of the Alexandrian war in 47 BC. Caesar the author, has been evaluated in numerous studies; notable are those by Adcock (1956), Riggsby (2006) and the collection of essays edited by Welch and Powell (1998); Batstone and Damon (2006) analyse in detail the *Civil War*, taking into account characterization and narrative structure. The connotations of Caesar's propaganda and self-representation are studied in Yavetz (1983) and Will (2008); dramatic elements within the *Commentaries* have been discussed by Rowe (1967) and Kahn (1971), who treats the *Gallic War* in dramaturgical terms; Anne and Peter Wiseman's edition of the *Gallic War (The Battle for Gaul)* experiments with what my study considers a major point in Caesar's performativity, the author's distancing from his character. By replacing Caesar's characteristic third person with the first person, the editors underline the autobiographical aspect of the narrative. Notwithstanding these immensely valuable contributions and the indisputable importance of the *Commentaries* as historical source and literary *tour de force* of propaganda, the relationship between the themes and characterization of Caesar in his literary works and his subsequent portrayal as character in epic and drama has not received enough attention.

Discussions of Caesar in the field of drama studies allow only a marginal importance to the *Commentaries* as sources for his dramatic reception. This is

understandable, given the lack of textual relationship between play texts and Caesar's accounts. Nevertheless, this should not exclude the possibility of influence of the *Commentaries* indirectly through other ancient historians' response to elements of Caesar's characterization which are rooted in his self-representation. Ideas about historical characters can be accumulated in various forms, which transcend the clear-cut line of textual imitation.<sup>6</sup> Drawing parallels between Caesarean self-characterization and its interpretation by the dramatists will elucidate the *Commentaries*' potential for thematic influence, created by the unique blending of author and protagonist. The ambivalent borderline between history and fiction, typical for ancient history, is deliberately obliterated in Caesar's case. Since he exercised control over his public image and immediate reception, the *Commentaries* emerge as a focalization conceived and shaped by Caesar himself. The works indicate the earnestness with which Caesar aimed to control his image for posterity; the power of the *Commentaries* to influence his reception should not be underrated. Moreover, since many aspects of Caesarean self-representation are subjected to scrutiny by ancient historiography, the general's portrayal is shaped precisely by the tension between the strong self-characterization and the reaction to it.

The second area, which I believe needs further exploration, is the transhistorical evaluation of the development of Caesar from a historical person into a dramatic character. Drama criticism engages in discussions habitually integrated within a study of specific plays featuring the character Caesar. In the field of classical reception, three recent remarkable studies have enriched the transhistorical cultural reception of Caesar:

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<sup>6</sup> Thomson (1952) and Miola (1983) recognize the broad cultural tradition as inspiration for Renaissance dramatists. I refer to these studies in the chapter on Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*.

the volume edited by Maria Wyke (2006) and her monograph (2007), an account focusing on the reception of specific stages of Caesar's life from antiquity to present day; *The Companion to Julius Caesar*, edited by Griffin (2009), includes entries on Caesar's career and reputation in his own time and analysis of his reception in history. However, although they consider plays and important production history, in particular that of Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, these studies are not centred on Caesar as a character in drama and therefore do not analyse in detail the transition from historical to dramatic representation.

These two issues, the *Commentaries* as influences on the reception of Caesar and the transhistorical and intergeneric development of Caesar from historical person to dramatic interpretation, are interrelated and have led to my fundamental research question: what elements from Caesar's self-representation, constituting themes and characterization, have been transmitted to his epic and dramatic representation? In order to pursue my investigation, I develop an argument structured on two levels, corresponding to the two issues outlined above.

I propose an investigation of the *Commentaries*, identifying specific 'epic' and 'dramatic' qualities, instrumental for the success of Caesar's personal propaganda. Intrinsic to epic Caesar is his extraordinary celerity, which allows him to acquire omnipresence and transcend temporality. This supernatural asset distinguishes Caesar as a certain quasi-divine presence. Caesar can also be considered as embodying 'dramatic' elements, expressed in the heightened sense of self-dramatization achieved by the self-referential use of the third person, the utilization of dramaturgical techniques and by highlighting the performativity of war and the gaze of the commander. The fusion of

author and protagonist exemplified in Caesar's works allow their assessment both on a level internal to the narrative, and on an external, or meta-level, as part of the author's political and personal propaganda. Accordingly, dramatic Caesar can extend the theatrical connotations of his project beyond the narrative and so the *Commentaries* become means for the establishing of a new, theatricalized reality of Caesarean politics.

My next step is to investigate the extent to which Caesarean self-representation with its epic-dramatic and author-protagonist fusion is preserved or, respectively, modified in specific epic and dramatic cases. To this end I engage in a study of intergeneric continuity and transformation of the reception of Caesar's character in the following works: Lucan's epic *Civil War*, Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, George Chapman's *The Tragedy of Caesar and Pompey*, and Bernard Shaw's *Caesar and Cleopatra*. Although it belongs to the field of drama studies, any transhistorical exploration of an ancient Roman personality simultaneously belongs to the field of classical reception. An aspect of this discipline is the capacity to evaluate the function of classical works as vessels of cultural and cross-cultural influences, but it can also assess the original works in the light of the existing interpretations. To facilitate such two-way reception of Caesar is precisely the aim of this study, since, to paraphrase Martindale's remark, our appreciation of Caesar's *Commentaries* has been conditioned by Shakespeare's tragedy.<sup>7</sup> Also, I doubt it is feasible to analyse a figure such as Julius Caesar without acknowledging his popular reception; thus, for example, my idea of 'epic' Caesar reflects the notion of epic as a large scale enterprise since both Caesar's career and aspirations evoke such popular impressions. Moreover, my method is not restricted

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<sup>7</sup> Martindale's claim: '...since Virgil, no reading of Homer, at least in the West, has been, or could be, wholly free of a vestigial Virgilian presence [...] because the Homer-Virgil opposition is so deeply inscribed...' (1993: 8); Gillespie (2011: 47-59) offers a good example of this two-way approach.

by ancient literary or drama theories but is informed by contemporary ideas and concepts such as performativity and subjective perception of time. In effect, my analysis of Caesar's works and his image in historiography invites a connection with contemporary appreciation of Caesar, thus aiming to confirm the necessity of structuring a classical receptions discourse dialectically.

### **Introducing the key Caesarean qualities**

In order to elucidate the important elements of Caesarean self-representation, I here introduce in more detail the constituents of the epic and dramatic aspects, discussed in the first chapter of the study. In order to address this question, at the risk of complicating the matter, I must first engage with a concept, fundamental for my view of Caesar's reception, namely his relationship with temporality.

Caesar's popular image transparently betrays a connection between the Roman general and the notion of time as historical progression. Caesar's foundation of a tradition of European rulers bearing his name – the Caesars – implies the ability to create an impact going beyond his lifetime. Caesar's name is also associated with a calendar, the Julian calendar, which, with slight adjustments by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582, is still the time reckoning system used in the Western world.<sup>8</sup> These ideas that he influenced time derive from ancient historiography, but I believe his relationship with time can be understood better if considered as an outcome of the specific fusion of epic-dramatic elements, first revealed in the *Commentaries*.

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<sup>8</sup> Connections between power and regulation of time, with reference to the Julian calendar, are discussed by Canetti (1962: 397-9). The subject of Caesar's calendar is considered in detail in the chapter on ancient historiography.

The term ‘time’, which often interchanges with ‘temporality’, has several connotations in my study. In his work on Shakespeare and time, Wagner (2012) (who does not consider *Julius Caesar*) defines his use of the concept of time in phenomenological terms, namely as ‘temporality’, denoting the psychological experience of time. Having experienced similar difficulties in the categorization of the specific aspects of the Caesarean relationship with time, I have also been predominantly concerned with the subjective or phenomenological perception of time and its connection with emotions. Temporality, in Husserl and Heidegger’s philosophy, signifies individual experience of time which produces the idea of cosmic time; although it can be argued that time has acquired certain objectivity, it nevertheless remains anchored as our internal concept.<sup>9</sup> Saint Augustine already presents time as an internal phenomenon, with past, present and future relative to our individual experience (*Confessions*, book 11). The subjective perception of time is studied by modern psychology and is related to emotion and change: as a function of the consciousness ‘...time is the experience of change with reference to a personal self’.<sup>10</sup>

Detailed discussion of bibliography on the philosophy of time is beyond the scope of this introduction, but there are two broad lines of thought, namely the phenomenological experience of time and its relationship with emotion, important for the

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<sup>9</sup> ‘We have access to the reality of time only as an appearance, or in an inner lived experience, but in doing so we are not abandoning the ideas of objectivity or evidence’ (Currie 2007: 83); Husserl’s definitive study on the subject is *The Phenomenology of Internal Time-consciousness*; the issues of time (zeit) and temporality (zeitlichkeit) are discussed in Heidegger’s *Sein und Zeit*. On anthropological and sociological views on the perception of time, see Gell (1992) and Hassard (1990).

<sup>10</sup> Hartocollis (1986:5). Time as duration depends on the individual psychophysical condition (for example attention span) (Hartocollis 1986: 9); on the construction of the concept of time by the human mind – time as change, based on anticipation of relief or something pleasurable – see Arlow (1989); commentary on Augustine’s concept of time in relation to narrative time is offered by Currie (2007: 62-71); the capability of emotions to influence the perception of time has been explored in relation to Homeric epic by Allen (2003) who states that the Greeks ‘knew that human passions, especially anger, could vary the flow of time for each individual...’ (62).

understanding of the relationship between Caesar and time. This relationship is related to the epic-dramatic aspects and exerts strategic control over his environment and his audience, consisting of both supporters and enemies; the result is a gradual imposing of Caesarean subjectivity onto the existing reality of Roman society. I understand time (available to us as temporality) as encompassing history and calendar time, in the case of the introduction of the Julian calendar. However, neither of these may be seen as cosmological time, but as a system reflecting time as phenomenological construct and subject to individual perception and manipulation.<sup>11</sup> In order to present a more comprehensive idea of the relationship between Caesar and temporality, it is necessary to consider in more detail the epic and dramatic elements, to which this relationship is intrinsic.

## **Epic Caesar**

The concept of epic is paradoxically elusive – in modern criticism, when specifically associated with epic poetry, it is generally accepted as a rigid, linear genre; it employs stereotypical characterization and often aims to propagate specific national identity. Epic is often contrasted to the novel, believed to replace epic in the modern world, focusing on inner conflicts and psychological depth. However, as a generic classification, epic demonstrates remarkable flexibility within its own boundaries: extending from Homeric epic to Milton, it can also be used to describe anything

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<sup>11</sup> Feeney (2007) offers a fascinating study on ancient time-reckoning systems and synchronization.

presented on large scale.<sup>12</sup> Indeed, modern culture cherishes the concept and ascribes the definition ‘epic’ to various media. Hence studies on epic generally acknowledge the difficulty of providing the reader with one definition of epic, because it is ‘the longest lived and most widely diffused of all literary forms’.<sup>13</sup> Accordingly, my concept of epic Caesar, albeit drawing on classical epic elements, also incorporates and invites interpretation in the more wide-ranging connotations of the term.

Epic Caesar is characterized by a relationship with temporality exemplified by what I call ‘epic progression’, initiated by Caesar’s extraordinary speed and culminating in exceptional totality of presence. This omnipresence elevates Caesar onto what may be perceived as a quasi-divine or superhuman plain and grants him a superior vantage point, contributing to the ‘epic’ scale of his campaigns. Within the narrative of his *Commentaries*, Caesar’s celerity is manifested in conducting surprising attacks, night action, and responding to rapid attacks with superior speed and organization. Although the emphasis characteristically falls on the achievement of the entire army under Caesar’s command and not on Caesar’s personal *aristeia*, as it were, the general’s individual speed is an important aspect of his self-representation. The overall impression is that Caesar can appear anywhere, usually unexpected; moreover, he seems to acquire a superior, quasi-divine perspective, which stems from the defying of temporal-spatial boundaries. Nevertheless, Caesar’s mortality is not questioned anywhere in the narrative, and in this respect he complies with the idea that the subject of epic is to depict mortal aspirations.

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<sup>12</sup> According to Hainsworth (1991:149) epic is used in the ‘vulgar’ sense in relation to film and in these cases it means ‘hardly more than “astounding”’; the relationship between epic and novel is explored in landmark studies by Lukács (1978) and Bakhtin (1981).

<sup>13</sup> Hainsworth (1991: 3). The statement of Merchant (1971:1) that there is ‘no value in attempting a single definition’, is generally shared by Johns-Putra (2006) and Toohey (1992).



However, his ability to transcend temporality is epic in the sense that it positions him between humans and divine powers.<sup>14</sup>

The subject matter of the conquest of Gaul also contributes to a distinctive epic feeling: it is evoked by the (self)depiction of Caesar as a conqueror of unknown lands and dangerous peoples, and his reaffirmation of the power of Romanitas.<sup>15</sup> In addition to the military action, highlighting the righteousness of the Romans and the fierceness of the foreign enemy, there is a substantial mythologization of the narrative; it is exemplified by descriptions of the German lands, inhabited by bizarre animals and peoples with peculiar social order; books 4 and 5 contain accounts of Caesar's expedition into Britain, considered to be at the edge of the civilized world.

Understandably, the nature of the *Civil War* is different – it is likely to have been more hastily written in order to serve a more blatant propaganda purpose. It also betrays a constant, yet successful struggle to portray the enemy as de-Romanized and to justify Caesar's invasion in Italy. Nevertheless, the sense in which Caesar is defined as epic is distinguishable in both narratives. The epic progression retains its vital elements in the *Civil War*; in the absence of true foreign enemy, Caesar successfully alienates the Pompeians – by highlighting his own superior speed, organization and omnipresence, he secures his epic perspective and exposes his enemy as marginal to Rome/Caesar.

Most importantly, the author-character fusion in both narratives enables the concept of quasi-divinity to be extended to encompass Caesar's authorial point of view,

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<sup>14</sup> According to Greene (1961:198), 'epic awe', is that which '...springs from the circumstance that a man can commit an extraordinary act while still remaining limited'. Caesar's liminal position is related to the fact that his supernatural temporal transgression positions him above the ordinary human beings, but also detaches him from the gods, who characteristically do not experience time. On the gods in epic, see Feeney (1993); on the subject of time and eternity in relation to god in Christianity, see Robinson (1995).

<sup>15</sup> A sense of reaffirmation of nationalistic values is evident in the conflict with the Helvetii tribe – in book 1, Caesar reminds the readers of the deaths of the Roman generals L. Cassius and L. Piso in 107 BC caused by the Helvetii and by vanquishing them, proclaims his role as avenger in the name of the SPQR.

which, within the narrative becomes akin to a godly perspective. By virtue of his sublimation between author and protagonist, Caesar succeeds in a large scale enterprise, creating a universe and acting the leading part in it, and as a result acquires control over his public image.

### **Dramatic Caesar**

My concept of ‘dramatic’ Caesar comprises three elements: ‘dramaturgical’, ‘performative’ and ‘theatrical’; although these have similar referential value insofar as they refer to a method which applies theatrical terminology to non-dramatic narratives, each term describes a different quality of Caesarean identity and behaviour. Dramatic Caesar encompasses various dramaturgical elements interwoven in the narrative of the *Commentaries*, such as *hybris* and *peripeteia*, or reversal.<sup>16</sup> *Hybris* (incidentally, an epic quality) is embodied by Caesarean enemies and occasionally by his subordinates. It is Caesar, who, by acting as *deus ex machina* (and ironically, also acting *hybristically*) causes reversal to the battle and brings victory. This is a stable pattern, perceptible both within a single episode and also in sequences – episodes of defeat, followed by victory. An example of the former is the siege of Alesia, with the decisive confrontation with Vercingetorix in book 7 of the *Gallic War*; the latter is demonstrated in the scenes of defeat at Gergovia, followed by victory at Alesia (book 7), as well as the defeat at Dyrrachium, and the subsequent victory at Pharsalus (*Civil War*, book 3).

Performativity functions in accordance with dramaturgical elements, but extends its impact to the way Caesar is perceived in history and as a result strongly affects

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<sup>16</sup> I apply these definitions without explicitly using Aristotle as reference point.

Caesarean characterization in epic and drama per se. The term performativity is a modern construct, and I apply it in a sense informed by the meaning defined by Ervin Goffmann (1990). According to Goffmann, who analyses human behaviour in dramaturgical terms, social performance is our only means of interacting with other humans and indicates status and occupation. Veracity in social behaviour is problematic; even discredited impressions may not be false.<sup>17</sup> In philosophical terms, performativity is connected to the ideas of John Austin and his theory of speech acts, which recognizes the complexity of fictional (or non-serious utterances) and the resulting indeterminacy of the distinction between reality and fiction.<sup>18</sup> Performance studies is integral to the concept of interdisciplinarity: ‘it cannot be mapped effectively because it transgresses boundaries, it goes where it is not expected to be’.<sup>19</sup> Thus, the wide-ranging concept of performativity can be amply reflected in an interdisciplinary reception of Caesar – it can be assessed in conjunction with the dramaturgical elements in the *Commentaries*, but also defines Caesar’s image and behaviour outside the narratives, in the areas of historiographic representation, epic and drama.

Within the *Commentaries*, performativity is manifested both as part of Caesar’s characterization and as being fundamental for the concept of theatre of war, entailing performance from the soldiers as well as the gaze of an audience – other soldiers, friends or enemies. Accordingly, Caesar enacts his role as commander with distinctive presence and gaze. His awareness of the notions of acting and disguising employed in the

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<sup>17</sup> Goffmann (1990:73).

<sup>18</sup> Austin’s most influential study is *How to do things with words* (1962); on Austin’s philosophy and performance theory, see Loxley (2007); for role distancing, see Goffmann (1975); critical evaluation of the concept of performativity, in terms of issues of the conscious act of social performance, is offered by Messinger et al. (1975).

<sup>19</sup> Schechner (1998: 360).

narratives signify conscious engagement with performativity. Moreover, performativity can be applied to evaluate historical Caesar's milieu. Goffmann's claim that '[A]ll the world is not, of course, a stage, but the crucial ways in which it isn't are not easy to specify',<sup>20</sup> is applicable to the distinct theatricality of the Roman society. Thus, the third element of dramatic Caesar – 'theatricality' – essentially describes the specific appropriation of social performance by the Late Republican culture, displaying a heightened sense of performative modes, related to rituals and status quo. Since I believe Caesar's conduct within his own environment is influenced by this theatricality, the discrepancy between his socialized and his 'all-too-human' self can be analysed in terms of the individual performativity and may shed light on the contrasting images of the general evident in ancient historiography. To summarise the relationship between these three concepts: dramatic Caesar operates predominantly within the *Commentaries*, and theatricality is related to Caesarean historical environment. Performativity is an overarching notion; serving as a bridge between the different stages of Caesarean reception, it becomes crucial for understanding the character of Caesar in drama. Various elements are integral to performativity but most important is Caesar's self-referential use of the third person, which creates a sense of distance between author and character and aims to promote the objectivity of the work. Considered in the dramatic medium, Caesar's performativity becomes a powerful play-within-a play: Shakespeare's Caesar plays a role conforming to the reality created by the conspirators, leading to his death and the liberation of his spirit; in Chapman's tragedy, Caesar's performativity finds expression in his demonstration of leniency; Shaw presents a character who, conscious of his reception and performance in history, experiments with his own image.

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<sup>20</sup> Goffmann (1990:78).

Caesar's dramatic aspect operates on two levels – internal to the narrative and external, meta-level. The meta-level of dramatic Caesar is also strongly related to temporality. The *Commentaries* should be seen as an ideological weapon, which effectively influences the Roman reality and attempts to introduce a new ideological layer, adding integrity to Caesar's position as a dominating factor in Roman politics. A theory put forward by Wiseman allows for a possible performative distribution of the *Commentaries* entailing the public reading of the works.<sup>21</sup> Clearly, the *Commentaries* should not be subjected to evaluation as a stage play; nevertheless, if Wiseman's argument is accepted, the works emerge as narratives with a well-crafted performative nature, part of a larger scale personal propaganda. In his fusion of author and character, Caesar is able to construct a new temporal layer, as it were, with his distinctive past, present and future, in which to engage his audience. In effect, the theatricalization of Caesar's career can be viewed in terms of analogy with the alternate temporality experienced in a dramatic performance.<sup>22</sup> The essence of this new reality is defined by Caesarean *clementia* and benevolence, qualities strongly manifested in the *Civil War*. Caesar represents himself as pragmatic, yet sensitive leader, whose primary concern is the avoidance of unnecessary violence. Thus, an important constituent of the new Caesarean reality is the ability to induce people to their life in the Caesarean world; the general's *clementia* effectively grants life and, respectively, time to people, in particular his Pompeian enemies.

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<sup>21</sup> Wiseman (1998(a):1-9).

<sup>22</sup> Performance is contained 'in oneness in a structure that is basically atemporal' (Limon 2010:101). According to Wagner (2012:13) 'theatre creates the conditions for objective time to come face to face with the phenomenological or subjective time'. Naturally, theatre shares atemporality with ritual, which essentially suspends time in order to evoke primordial moment of creation (Turner (1982), Eliade (1985: 35)).

The transition from self-representation to historical representation signals the transition of Caesarean reality from virtual (as expressed in the *Commentaries*) to actual (ancient historiography). This is not an easy passage and the fundamental clash between the Caesarean and the established reality becomes evident in ancient historiographic presentations of Caesar depicting the period between the end of the Civil War and his assassination. Caesar's enemies also construct a 'virtual' reality, which aims to expose him as an enemy of the state; the tension between these two worldviews becomes the subject of narratives of Caesar's death, including Shakespeare's tragedy.

## **Chapter outline**

Caesar's epic and dramatic aspects are analysed in my initial chapter on his *Commentaries*, forming the groundwork of my research project. Chapter two investigates Lucan's *Civil War* as a reaction to Caesar's literary and historical authority, in which the poet demonizes the epic-dramatic aspects of his protagonist; nevertheless by granting Caesar superiority, Lucan also elevates himself to a position to contest the Caesarean reality. Chapter three focuses on Caesar's depiction in ancient historiography – by considering events not subject to interpretation by Caesar's works and Lucan, such as Caesar's triumphs and his death, I explore the development of the epic-dramatic character in the light of his dramatization by the historical canon and the Late Republican performative milieu. Chapters four, five and six comprise the three dramatic case studies and investigate Caesar's relationship with time, his performativity (in particular his self-referential use of the third person) and dramatic responses to Caesarean reality.

Shakespeare's Caesar performs the role of haughty autocrat in the rival reality created by the conspirators; however, by embodying elements of Lucanian *furor* and modifying his celerity to become impetus to meet his death, Caesar liberates his spirit and channels his power through Antony and Octavian. By accentuating Caesar's failure to prevent Cato's suicide, Chapman undermines his celerity, thus compromising the protagonist's entire epic progression; although performativity is related exclusively to his manifestation of clemency, Caesar's alleged inconsistency of character (exemplified by his adversaries' views contrasted to his own actions) emerges as a credible depiction. In Shaw's play, Caesar experiences an internalization of his epic aspects, his relationship with temporality based on the struggle against his ageing. With his amoral nature, Caesar is superior to his environment and is capable of evaluating his position on a meta-historical level; humour and anachronisms challenge Caesar's historical gravity and highlight Shaw's understanding of history as a product of creative interpretation.

### **Scope of the work, notable omissions and contextualization**

There are two chronological lacunas in the study. The first concerns the medieval reception of Caesar. Although the medieval period had a crucial impact on the shaping of the Renaissance image of Caesar, the purpose of the study is to explore the transition from Caesarean self-representation to dramatization, and so it is appropriate that the focus remains on the play texts. The second lacuna is located between Chapman's and Shaw's works. The three dramatic case studies have been selected in order to create a framework representing three distinctive periods of Caesar's life and career that could be

tagged as ‘death’, ‘love’ and ‘war’. Considering Shakespeare’s work, by far the definitive stage portrayal of Caesar, together with one of the least known texts – Chapman’s tragedy – sets a clear dynamic relationship firmly based in the Early Modern dramaturgy. Choosing Shaw’s work as representative of the ‘love’ theme, however, entails deviation from the established pattern and therefore its inclusion requires justification. Shaw’s depiction of Caesar concludes this study for several important reasons. Shaw’s Caesar is a character who consciously realises his role in history and demonstrates unique internalization of his experiences. Moreover, Shaw’s bold claims for an ability to determine a valid historical representation of the Roman general, a result of his concept of history as product of artistic interpretation, meets Caesarean self-representation and thus brings a sense of closure in the study founded on analysis of Caesar’s *Commentaries*. Shaw’s distinctive comical anachronisms, although seemingly departing from the historical integrity of the character, offer a vision of Caesar which bridges the Early Modern representations with our contemporary point of view. Finally, this is the only dramatic presentation of Caesar as a comic character. Comedy, in all its forms, from buffoonery, through parody of other dramatic genres and historical events, to ironic self-perception, is important for Caesar’s liberation from historical rigidity and allows him freedom of expression.<sup>23</sup>

The plays I have chosen to focus on are not exclusive in terms of dealing with the ‘love’, ‘war’ and ‘death’ aspects of Caesar’s life. Since Caesar was a popular subject, especially in Renaissance drama, I here offer an overview of some of the major omissions in my study in order to create a more comprehensive picture of Caesar’s dramatic

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<sup>23</sup> As Shaw himself put it in his notes to the play: ‘[A]s to Caesar’s sense of humour, there is no more reason to assume that he lacked it than to assume that he was deaf or blind’ (Shaw 1960:131).



incarnations. Caesar features as protagonist in the anonymous *Caesar's Revenge*, acted by the students in Oxford (1595, published in 1606), William Alexander's *Julius Caesar* (1607) as well as *The False One* (c.1619-20?), published in the 1647 Beaumont and Fletcher first folio, but possibly authored by Fletcher and Massinger.<sup>24</sup> Caesar makes appearances in Thomas Kyd's *Cornelia* (1595, translation of Garnier's Latin play) and Ben Jonson's *Catiline* (1611). In addition, a notable operatic instance is Handel's baroque masterpiece *Giulio Cesare in Egitto* (1724). In *Catiline*, Caesar appears as a true Machiavel, whose devious political mind supports Catiline, Jonson aptly reflecting on suspicions of possible incriminating association of Caesar with the conspirators, found in ancient historiography. The fact that in Kyd's *Cornelia* Caesar does not appear until Act IV allows for substantial speculation regarding the true nature of the character; his portrait is drawn by hostile Cornelia, suffering for her husband Pompey's death at the hands of the Egyptians, and other Pompeians, including Cicero, who laments the atrocities of Civil War. The anonymous *Caesar's Revenge* and William Alexander's *Julius Caesar* depict large scale action covering substantial periods of Caesar's life in the aftermath of the Civil War. *Caesar's Revenge* offers detailed account of Caesar's exploits in Egypt and his assassination, and concludes with the conspirators' defeat at Philippi. Alexander's tragedy also begins with Caesar's victory in the Civil War, but focuses on the conspiracy, thus inviting parallels with Shakespeare's work. However, in terms of dramatic structure, the two plays differ, since Alexander's text ends with Caesar's death, notably taking place offstage. Interestingly, both incorporate supernatural characters: throughout *Caesar's Revenge*, Discord acts as a chorus commenting on the events and

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<sup>24</sup> On the authorship of Fletcher and Massinger, see Luce (1912: 3-6), Oliphant (1927:234-7). A detailed list of plays featuring Julius Caesar is offered by Griffin (2009:392-96)

naturally expresses content with the tragic outcome of the action; Alexander's play is opened by Juno, who, in her wrath against Caesar (as a descendent of Venus), evokes the Furies to bring his ruin.

*The False One* presents an account of the events in Alexandria, closely following the historical sources. Caesar is duly captivated by Cleopatra but the discovery of the riches of Egypt and the subsequent attack of the Egyptians distracts the general's focus away from the beauty of the young queen and directs it to war and zeal for conquest. Caesar is not seen to leave Alexandria at the end of the play, thus showing correlation with historiographic accounts, according to which Caesar remains in Egypt for almost half a year after his victory. Such an ending stands in contrast with Shaw's Caesar who departs for Rome, and although seemingly unconcerned with possible danger, is soon to face what we know is going to be the fatal end.<sup>25</sup> The relationship between *The False One* and Shaw's *Caesar and Cleopatra* is discussed by Couchman (1973).

A representative of the so-called *opera seria*, Handel's opera *Giulio Cesare in Egitto* was written for the Royal Academy of Music and premiered in 1724 at the Haymarket. The libretto, by Nicolo Haym, presents the events of Caesar's arrival in Alexandria and his struggle against the Egyptians and focuses, not surprisingly, on the love affair with Cleopatra, celebrated in wonderful arias and heroic action. Unlike the majority of dramatic works discussed above, which are rarely staged, *Giulio Cesare* has enjoyed numerous productions, including major revival in recent years.<sup>26</sup>

Although the works discussed above have not been considered in the study, they could make a valuable contribution to further analysis of the reception of Caesar. The

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<sup>25</sup> Leary (1962: 46) notes that Caesar's return to Rome is mentioned thirteen times in the play, thus reminding the audience that he is going to his death, but as a great man fulfilling his destiny.

<sup>26</sup> On *Giulio Cesare*, see Monson (1985), Fisher (2000).

reasons for these omissions are pragmatic: Handel's *Giulio Cesare* would offer new perspectives on the epic-dramatic Caesar but it would also add an extra layer of generic representation to be considered; *Catiline* and *Cornelia* present interesting portrayals of Caesar, which can be evaluated in terms of their relationship with historiographic accounts and their contribution to the Caesarean reception in drama. However, since they do not feature Caesar as protagonist, the potential for a comprehensive manifestation of epic-dramatic aspects are limited. On the other hand, although they present rich characterization of Caesar, the action of *Caesar's Revenge* and Alexander's tragedy to large extent overlaps with Shakespeare's *Caesar*; therefore, these two texts have been excluded purely for the sake of allowing diversity in terms of subject matter. Nevertheless, I refer to them in the discussion of Chapman's dramaturgical decisions; *The False One* is also occasionally referred to in the chapter on Shaw's *Caesar and Cleopatra*.

The scope of my study may be considered to be both wide and specific. It is wide in the sense that it covers Caesarean representation in four historical periods – from Late Republican Rome, through the age of Silver Latin, Early Modern drama and concludes with a play composed in the last decade of the nineteenth century. Each period is characterized by specific attitude towards the personality of Julius Caesar and offers distinctive context against which to consider Caesarean reception. However, at the risk of de-contextualizing the character, I have evaluated each case study that is subject to investigation in terms of its relationship with Caesar's self-representation in the *Commentaries*. In effect, the historical context of each work has been considered in so far as it serves to illuminate specific points regarding epic-dramatic Caesar. In other words,

the context in which Caesar is explored is Caesar himself. Thus, the focus of this work may be deemed specific in the sense that this is a transhistorical study of specific aspects and themes of Caesarean self-representation. The oscillation between historical context and Caesarean context, as it were, is a challenging process and touches upon an issue in classical reception, namely the necessity of contextualization of a given work in order to conduct a comprehensive analysis of its reception.<sup>27</sup> Indeed, my approach may appear to disregard the notion of historical relativism and in effect possibly jeopardize the integrity achieved by drawing a more complete picture of Caesar in the specific period. Therefore, I have attempted to establish a ‘golden mean’ by focusing on a very specific set of qualities crucial for Caesar’s self-representation in the *Commentaries*, but the ways these have been inherited and modified in subsequent historical, epic and dramatic media remain open for contextual interpretation.

Finally, I would like to address the issue of translation. The process of translating a work and constructing a translation as a valid ‘version’ of the original generates questions regarding the authority of interpretation as well as the nature of the original as absolute entity, the meaning of which should remain intact. More specifically, using classical works in translation reflects a question at the heart of classical reception studies, namely whether the reception of classical works may be the domain of non-classicist researchers and audience.<sup>28</sup> I have incorporated the use of ancient narratives in their English translation for a specific reason. As an intergeneric and transhistorical study, its aim is to create a sense of continuity in the reception of Caesar. This continuity, however, is not founded on textual influences and linguistic parallels; the epic-dramatic aspects of

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<sup>27</sup> Issues of contextualization and recontextualization are discussed by Martindale (2003) and (2007).

<sup>28</sup> This is seen as a challenge in the future development of classical reception by Porter (2008).

Caesarean self-representation are transmitted in a complex intertextual and transcendental process, illuminating the colossal presence of Julius Caesar in the European cultural tradition. Accordingly, this study belongs to the field of dramaturgy as well as classical reception; therefore, considering classical works in translation enhances the level of understanding of the impact of these works beyond the classical studies framework and within the discipline of theatre studies.

## Chapter 1: Caesar's Epic Drama: the Gallic and Civil Wars

All manifestations of Julius Caesar ultimately derive from Julius Caesar's presentation of himself. This chapter is long and arduous because it takes us on the long, but seminal literary journey through Caesar's own accounts of his actions. It offers a view of Caesar's *Commentaries* on the Gallic and Civil wars as a fusion of drama, epic and history. I argue that the works define a vital aspect of Caesar's career, namely the process of creation of an alternative timeframe analogous to the alternative temporality experienced in theatre, which engulfs the audience of the *Commentaries*. It is through specific 'epic' and 'dramatic' effects that Caesar achieves the aim of his project to impose his subjective views and actions onto the existing reality of Roman society. To this end he constructs two supreme examples of literary/historical works, which utilize both epic tradition and dramaturgical techniques in order to create a virtual reality, which gradually acquires an overwhelming degree of actuality.

After a short account of the historical background to Caesar's works, I embark on an analysis of the key themes characterizing the epic and dramatic aspects of Caesarean self-representation. The epic effect is primarily created by Caesar's associations of his military endeavours with speed; this extraordinary *celeritas* is considered as the impulse for what I term an 'epic progression', leading to a feeling of omnipresence and spatial-temporal supremacy of Caesar; as a result, ubiquitous Caesar acquires a quasi-metaphysical status approximating the divine. The dramatic aspects are revealed in the sustained performativity and metatheatricality evident at various points of the narrative in relation to the protagonist and other characters; through the use of dramaturgical motifs

and techniques, such as *hybris* and *peripeteia*, Caesar disguises his own emotional and subjective motivation for war by setting himself against the irrational enemy (including the Pompeians) presented as different qualities of foreignness. As a result, Caesar not only highlights his ‘epic’ supremacy but also emerges as a rational and benevolent leader. The final section of the chapter investigates the transcendental value of Caesar’s epic and dramatic aspects. The notion of Caesar’s control of temporality is considered on a level, external to the narrative – it is revealed in the relationship of the works with the audience and Caesar’s propaganda concerned with influencing historical time.

## Historical backdrop

At the age of forty-one, Gaius Julius Caesar reached the pinnacle of the republican *cursus honorum* and became consul in 59 BC. The so-called first triumvirate was already functioning and Crassus and Pompey assisted Caesar in his election. In a year of turbulent political activity, at times involving rather blatant violence against his consular colleague Bibulus, disregard of senatorial debates and presenting the laws to be voted by the popular assembly, Caesar secured his proconsulship of Cisalpine and Transalpine Gaul, plus Ilyria, for the unprecedented period of five years.<sup>29</sup> The war against the German chief Ariovistus and the Belgic tribes offered Caesar almost immediate opportunities for conquest and military glory. In 56 BC, at Luca, not far from the Italian border, Caesar met Pompey in order to plan the future of their partnership. Crassus and Pompey were to become consuls for 55 BC and Caesar was to secure his

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<sup>29</sup> Bibulus’ adversity during Caesar’s turbulent consulship in 59 BC (Dio 38.6; Plutarch 14 (note that unless stated otherwise, all references are to Plutarch’s *Caesar*)); the enmity between the two men is evident in the *Civil War*, in which Caesar assigns Bibulus the role of a prominent villain.

command of Gaul for another five years. The second proconsular term of Caesar was ever more intense: Caesar led two expeditions to Britain, and finally met the personification of the Gallic resistance – Vercingetorix.

The events of the years 58-50 BC gradually shaped Caesar's image as a general with an epic quest to conquer barbarian tribes and to explore unknown lands and peoples. The Senate confirmed his achievement by voting numerous days of thanksgiving.<sup>30</sup> The celebrations 'invading' the calendar can be seen as an overture to the *Ludi Victoriae Caesaris* that would become an annual celebration of Caesar's victories after 46 BC. But before claiming the calendar his own, Caesar had to undertake a conquest of Rome itself.

After two serious blows to the unity of the triumvirate, the Senate slowly began to reclaim its power.<sup>31</sup> With Caesar away in Gaul, Pompey was mediating between the coalition and the Senate. A political crisis ensued and although Pompey continued to defend Caesar's interests, confirming (albeit awkwardly) his exclusive rights to appear as a candidate for consulship *in absentia* while still in Gaul, the political situation became more openly hostile to Caesar. His position was undermined by the Senate's action to replace him and the terminal date of his *imperium* (and political immunity against prosecution which he, as the majority of Roman magistrates, was facing after the end of their mandate) became more problematic. It is likely that Caesar began to anticipate a military conflict.<sup>32</sup> Aulus Hirtius – Caesar's associate and future consul of 43 BC – 'completed' the *Gallic War* by adding the additional Book 8, describing the proconsul's

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<sup>30</sup> Caesar mentions three occasions: fifteen days (2.35), and twenty days (4.38; 7.90).

<sup>31</sup> Factors in the destabilization of the triumvirate were the death of Julia, Caesar's daughter and Pompey's wife, in 54 BC (Plutarch 23; Dio 39.64) and the death of Crassus in 53 BC in the campaign against the Parthians (Dio 40.27; Plutarch, *Crassus*).

<sup>32</sup> For a concise discussion on the terminal date of Caesar's command in Gaul, see Stocker (1961); Rawlings (1998:180) suggests that Caesar was possibly envisaging a conflict with Pompey whilst fighting in Gaul; this view is supported by Riggsby (2006: 132).



last year in Gaul. Anticipating the beginning of the *Civil War*, the end of book 8 becomes an interesting external link between Caesar's own narratives. The general's problems with the Senate are briefly explained and the book ends with Caesar hoping that a peaceful resolution may be found, 'rather than restoring to war' (8.51).<sup>33</sup>

From the very beginning of the *Civil War*, Caesar emphasizes his attempts at peaceful negotiations; however, these are brought to a stalemate with Pompey accepting only Caesar's return to Rome and the agreement that if Caesar disbanded his soldiers Pompey would do the same. Caesar does not agree, and the lack of efficient negotiations slows down the 'speedy execution of his plans' (1.26); after another failed attempt to negotiate, Caesar decides to wage war in earnest.

Existing in both Latin and Greek literary tradition, in their original form the commentaries serve the purpose of notes, or sketches, of events recorded in order to be edited and shaped in the form of 'proper' historical narrative. Julius Caesar's profound understanding of the theatricality of his world was integrated in the creation of his public image. He utilized the conventional tradition of *Comentarii* writing in order to create a complex work in which drama and epic define Caesar's *own* history as proconsul of Gaul and his struggle against the Pompeians in the Civil War.<sup>34</sup>

At first glance, in the case of the *Gallic War*, the fostering of a feeling of patriotism and nationalistic values invites the superiority of 'epic' Caesar; on the other

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<sup>33</sup> All quotations are from Caesar. 1982. *The Conquest of Gaul*. Translated by S.A. Handford, revised with a new introduction by Jane Gardner (London: Penguin) and Caesar. 1976. *Civil War*. Translated with an introduction by Jane Gardner (N.Y.: Dorset Press). I use the more popular title of the work, instead of the original title *C. Iuli Caesaris commentarii rerum gestarum*; Cleary (1985:345-6) notes that the later/alternative title *Gallic War* focuses on the military exploits only thus possibly narrowing down the meaning of the narrative.

<sup>34</sup> Commentaries were written by various individuals of different social and political rank; on Caesar's *Commentarii* as *Res Gestae*, and a discussion of the genre see DeWitt (1942), Murphy (1949), Adcock (1956), Riggsby (2006). By combining the *Commentarii* and the *Res Gestae*, Caesar has invented a new literary genre (Cleary 1985:347).

hand, the *Civil War* transmits a more dramatic message, reflecting a highly personalized conflict between Caesar and his enemies and focuses on Caesar as a character whose humane qualities may bring him closer to the audience. Although it is tempting, for the sake of clarity of categorization, to impose a clear-cut division, which assigns the category ‘epic’ to the *Gallic War* and ‘dramatic’ to the *Civil War*, in fact the narrative structure of both works displays a mixture of these two elements; merging into one coherent outcome, the epic-dramatic fusion becomes the intellectual bedrock for Caesar’s absolute power.

## **Epic effect**

### **Speed**

Speed is a fundamental quality, associated with the general’s strategic abilities and his knowledge of enemy psychology. Caesar’s famous *celeritas* is put into action soon after the beginning of the *Gallic War* – pursuing the forces of Helvetii, the Romans build a bridge in one day thus causing a shock to the Gauls, who usually take twenty days to complete a similar structure (1.13).<sup>35</sup>

The battle against the Nervii at the river Sambre is a dramatic account on the eminence of Caesarean speed. The Nervii attack before the Romans manage to complete the building of their camp and the remaining two legions are still on their way behind the

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<sup>35</sup> Ezov (1996:94) remarks that even though Caesar might not have been a tactical innovator, his ‘relatively skilled use of field intelligence’ helped him to achieve the multiplying of mass by speed.

baggage train. The Nervii act fast, but naturally, Caesar emerges as one who can oppose them. He does it magnificently:

[C]aesar had everything to do at once – hoist the flag which was the signal for running to arms, recall the men from their work on the camp, fetch back those who had gone far afield [...], form the battle line, address the men, and sound the trumpet signal for going into action (2.20).<sup>36</sup>

The *Civil War* also offers examples of Caesar's legendary *celeritas*: the general's crossing of the Rubicon with a single legion, his swift advance and capture of numerous towns, as well as the pursuit that follows Caesar's raising the blockade of Dyrrachium. In the latter example, the general sends the baggage out of camp first, followed by the rest of the army; he and his escort are the last to leave. The Pompeians are tricked into believing that Caesar's speed is affected by the baggage while he is in fact further away (3.75). Caesar is always one step ahead – when both armies encamp and the Pompeians disperse to gather forage, he has the troops quickly strike camp and start marching again. The feeling of haste is highlighted with the hopeless inability of Pompey to catch up with Caesar's advance.

A key device used by Caesar the author to convey the sense of speed is the description of battles; the audience are often informed about manoeuvres and intelligence reports, but once the battle has started, the victory of the Romans is soon at hand. There is

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<sup>36</sup> Brown (1999:339) rightly perceives the epic Caesar in this episode – he is '...the warrior, the Homeric hero whose personal intervention turns, or at least stems, the tide of battle'; Riggsby (2006:196-8) notes that it was common for the general to speak as if he fought the war himself; on Caesar's attitude towards his legates and soldiers in the narrative, see Welch (1998).

no lack of battle description proper, but even though fighting may continue for hours, the victory seems to come suddenly and almost to the surprise both to the enemy and the audience. Through the clarity and brevity of language, advocated by Caesar throughout his life, he successfully conveys the feeling of haste and disposes of any unnecessary deviations that may cause a digression of his main action.<sup>37</sup> The speed of action leaves both the audience and Gauls almost breathless, while Caesar and his faithful troops defeat the boundaries of ordinary temporality. A good example is the account of the battle of Pharsalus, the culmination of the *Civil War*. The actual battle action feels very short, despite its duration from the early morning until midday. The sense of speed defines the style of battle description: Caesar glides over the details, offering a sweeping panorama of the battlefield, but focuses only on few actions which are decisive for the victory. He describes Pompey's cavalry attack, aimed to overwhelm the Caesarean horsemen (3.86). However, Caesar informs us of his training of a special corps to deal with the cavalry; once he deploys these troops, they soon force the horsemen to flee and counterattack the enemy wing commanded by Pompey. The enemy morale is shattered; there is general panic, reinforced by the ignoble flight of Pompey himself.

In the *Gallic Wars*, Caesar defines his enemies as barbarians but distinguishes between the habits and beliefs of different tribes which vary mainly relative to their

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<sup>37</sup> 'Caesar schrieb, wie gesagt, schnell' (Will 2008:14); Adcock (1956:73) suggests that Caesar uses historical present tense to show speed. Caesar was a leading grammarian and a gifted rhetorician, belonging to the 'Atticist' school that favoured linguistic clarity and purity (Cicero, *Brutus* 75.262; Adcock (1956)); Caesar's syntax is '...more sophisticated than anything written previously, apart from oratory...' (Hall 1998:16); his language is 'spare yet muscular' (Brown 1999:337); 'in Caesar's hands, stylistic nudity is indeed a costume' (Kraus 2009:164). Morgan (1997) considers the linguistic sophistication of Caesar's statements as a cause of misinterpretation by his contemporaries; on Caesar's *De Analogia* see Hendrickson (1906); on Caesar's clarity as part of his Epicurean stance, see Bourne (1977:422).

proximity to the Roman border.<sup>38</sup> It is important that any similarities between Romans and Gauls are not indigenous, but features adapted from the Roman influence and not sufficient to identify them as non-barbarians. However, one seemingly small detail, pointed out by Caesar, marks the difference between Gauls and Romans in terms of perception of time: since all Gauls believe they have descended from the god Dis, they always start measuring time from the night, not from the day (6.18). It is this inverted reckoning of days that in fact marks a fundamental difference in the temporal worldview of Gauls and Romans, a difference that positions the Gauls on the enemy side. Nevertheless, it is important that Caesar is capable of adapting himself to this temporal otherness, because he is equally active in the night as well as in the day. The general used to attack at night is always in a more advantageous position. It is habitual for Caesar to start marching (or sailing – for instance the first invasion of Britain) around midnight, and as the sun rises he dramatically appears on the horizon to the surprise of his enemies (4.23, 5.9). Night attacks are also common practice (1.12, 1.21); notable is the action in Gergovia, when Caesar takes a strategic hill in the dead of night and deprives the besieged Gauls of their water supply (7.36). The indifference to the night-day division emphasizes Caesar's speed – when ordinary people rest, he advances unchecked by the night. This is a strategy also applied by Caesar's lieutenants, most notably Titus Labienus, the reputed right hand of Caesar.<sup>39</sup> In contrast, it is notable that despite their reverence for the night, the Gauls are unable to conduct a successful night action: the

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<sup>38</sup> Gardner (1983:181-9) discusses the three 'types' of peoples in Caesar's narrative: the Gauls closer to the Province have magistrates and follow Roman customs; tribes further away are still under kingship; Germans live a pastoral life, and have centralized government only in times of war. On the representation of the Gauls and their evolution through contact with the Romans see Riggsby (2006).

<sup>39</sup> Caesar may have not envisaged Labienus' change of allegiance on the brink of the civil war; therefore, ironically, the positive image he had given his *legatus pro praetore* served his *Civil War* characterization purposes brilliantly: Labienus becomes an embodiment of treachery and cruelty. On Labienus and his relationship with Caesar and the Pompeians, see Tyrrell (1972).

besieged Atuatuca attempt a sortie which results in their capture and enslavement (2.33); the Gallic reinforcements at Alesia attack Caesar's defences at midnight (7.81) but are eventually repelled.

The pattern with night action set in Gaul, demonstrating Caesar's control of Gallic temporality, is recurrent in the *Civil War* too. It is related to a certain similarity in the depiction of the enemy in Caesarean narratives – as I demonstrate below, the Pompeians are depicted in stereotypical 'barbarian' terms in the broad cultural sense and their lack of organization, slowness and irrational conduct are set in contrast to Caesarean assets, such as speed and rationality. In a scene during the Spanish campaign, both forces encamp opposite each other; there is an unsuccessful Pompeian operation around midnight – soldiers who have been sent for water, are caught by Caesar's cavalry (1.66). Consequently, in a war council, Pompeians decide against night operations, because these are always detected by Caesar (1.67).

Despite the fact that *celeritas* is an exclusive characteristic of Caesar, it is occasionally granted to the enemy in order to emphasize Caesar's own supremacy in speed. The surprising attack of the Nervii, mentioned above, is a case in point. At the very beginning of *Civil War*, the enemy 'attacks' on the political front: the enemies of Caesar in the Senate act with 'haste' – the pro-Caesarean tribunes are given no time to react, his friends had no time to acquaint Caesar with the events in Rome (1.5). The answer of Caesar is to advance through Italy with his thirteenth legion (soon to be joined by the twelfth (1.15)) and reaches Corfinium. His movement resembles an avalanche of haste crushing on towns and communities. It is also a wave of emotion saturated with the indignation of Caesar, the loyalty of his troops, and the fear of the people, subsequently

turned into support. The fear of the Pompeians – Lentulus retreats, meets Vibulus, who takes over his forces and then joins Domitius – betrays a sense of haste both in Caesar's invasion and Pompey's retreat. Since everyone around Caesar is under the influence of the general's celerity, when Mark Antony is sent to the nearby town of Sulmo, its support is secured on the same day. Following Pompey's retreat to Greece, Caesar arrives in Rome. There, the remaining senators still hesitate to welcome the new Caesarean government and so 'three days were spent in discussion and excuses' (1.33) about whom to send as an envoy to Pompey; a tribune attempts to delay the work but 'Caesar found out this plot, after several days had been wasted, [...] gave up the rest of his projected business and left Rome for Further Gaul' (*ibid.*). Resolved not to waste time, Caesar leaves the senators spellbound by the dismay brought by Civil War and heads towards Spain.

### **Personification of time**

Throughout the narrative of the *Gallic War*, while Caesar progresses through the years of his proconsulship, he becomes gradually more involved in Gaul during the winter season. Such an involvement out of the traditional campaign season carries deeper connotations signifying a gradual imposition of a new temporality for both the *characters* and the *audience* of the *Gallic War*. In Books 1-4, Caesar follows the common principle of suspending campaigns during the winter. This gap in the military action causes an interruption of the flow of the narrative – in a sense Caesar's virtual temporality ceases to exist for the audience. With a brief report of Caesar's departures for Italy, the author

defines the winter months as containing somehow trivial but nevertheless important proconsular duties (for example, trials), recognized by the Roman citizens as a familiar part of their life. The hero comes back to society and by conducting his civilian political duties shares its reality. Meanwhile, the thick white veil of snow transforms Gaul into a timeless entity. However, Book 4 marks a winter assembly of the army taking place earlier than usual. In Book 5, Caesar spends his first winter in Gaul and as a result, the accounts of three consecutive years reveal the full dramatic and epic potential of the rough winters. The audience experiences year-round rebellions and sieges with Caesar, and the Gauls are deprived from the little respite which would let them enjoy their native chaos. Year after year, Caesar leads Rome into foreign lands, imposes Roman time on Gaul and establishes Caesarean time in Rome.

As a consequence of his superior speed, contrasted to the enemy's incapacity for adequate reaction, Caesar, albeit inconspicuously, emerges as a personification of time for all the newly conquered or not yet conquered lands. When the Roman army invades a foreign territory, together with its eagles, it brings the Caesarean temporality and imposes it on the tribes living in the state of chaos.<sup>40</sup> From the very beginning of his work, Caesar demonstrates his knowledge about the territory beyond Transalpine Gaul and the various tribes who live on the vast territory. The German tribes are also given a prominent role in Caesar's narrative and in a sense they are defined as the true enemy of Rome.<sup>41</sup> There is an important difference between the description of the Gauls on one hand, and Germans

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<sup>40</sup> By reaching new land, the conqueror, acting like a god, re-establishes order in the chaos of the unknown. Eliade (1985:9-11).

<sup>41</sup> On the numbers and naming of tribes see Riggsby (2006: 71-73), who also notes that 'the precise differentiation of Gauls promised [...] is never delivered' (71). According to Riggsby, the unusual tripartite, rather than binary ('us vs. them') division (Romans, Gauls, Germans) is used by Caesar in order to present the conquest of Gaul as one complete enterprise – otherwise his opponents could accuse him of not subjecting Germany as well (69).



and Britons on the other, the former being more civilized (mainly due to the influence of Roman trade), whereas the latter groups display the typical qualities of the untamed barbarians. The diet of the Germans is peculiar; they have no organized government and thus emerge as diametrically opposed to Roman culture (6.21-28); the Britons are located on an island at the edge of the civilized world. Moreover, this otherness of Caesar's Germans and Britons is also temporal and conditions them as living in somewhat primordial chaos, in which time (in the Roman/Caesarean sense) does not exist. This life in timelessness is reassured by their limited existence – for example, for the Germans it is '...the greatest glory to lay waste as much as possible of the land around them and to keep it uninhabited' (6.23). Thus the clash between Caesar and his barbarian enemies can also be seen as a conflict of time against timelessness.

Another archetypal collision – nature versus civilization/technology – is also interwoven between the lines of Caesar's narratives. In Book 4 of the *Gallic War*, Caesar decides to cross the Rhine answering a request for help by the Ubii, the only German tribe allied with the Romans; they offer Caesar their boats, but the general dismisses such means of transport as 'both too risky and beneath his dignity as a Roman commander' (4.17); instead, he orders a bridge to be built. The Roman way is to subject nature, rather than to utilize it. The same pattern can be detected again during the Spanish campaign in the *Civil War*. When a storm with heavy rain causes flood that blocks Caesar in between two rivers, the progress of the awaited train with supplies and some Gallic troops is impeded by the flood and they are subsequently attacked by the Pompeians. Just when the situation becomes desperate, Caesar builds boats and transports troops during the night, surprises a foraging party and re-establishes his presence in the area (1.48-55). The

Pompeian general Afranius constructs a bridge over the river Ebro, whereas as a response to nature's 'attack' (the storm described above) Caesar decides to divert part of the flow of river Sicoris (1.61). Thus epic Caesar is capable of physically changing the landscape in order to fit his strategy. The progression from building a bridge to diverting a river reflects the growing Caesarean power over nature.

Perhaps the only unfavourable terrain for the Roman army, the forest in Caesar's narrative becomes a spectacular example of the chaos-order antagonism. In Book 3 of the *Gallic War*, Caesar faces the cunning Gallic strategy of the Menapii and Morini tribes to retreat to a thick forest and organize raids from within. The general advances through the forest meticulously cutting down every tree that stands in his way.<sup>42</sup> The clash between nature and technology exposes the underlying cultural difference between Romans and their (foreign) enemies. The German forest, however, is of a different sort and is presented by Caesar as an equivalent to a mythical dwelling place, evocative of the feeling of timelessness related to the German tribes. The Hercynian forest (6.24-8) has a known beginning, but since the narrator confesses that its vastness cannot be circumscribed, its dimensions remain shrouded in mystery. Acting as a natural barrier of timelessness, the forest is also a dwelling place for strange, semi-mythical animals.<sup>43</sup> Another forest, also discussed in Book 6, is the Bacenis, where the German tribe of the Suebi retreat and decide to wait for Caesar's arrival (6.10). Caesar, however, does not follow through the woods for fear of lack of supplies. Although he turns back, he had

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<sup>42</sup> I believe it was this episode that inspired Lucan for the scene in his epic in which Caesar cuts down a sacred grove in order to obtain timber for his fortifications at Massilia (Lucan, *Civil War* 3.399-452).

<sup>43</sup> This is a rare instance of Caesar both acknowledging other sources of information and using first person singular for the narrator: '...the Hercynian forest (which I see was known to Eratosthenes and other Greeks, who call it Orcynia)...' (6.24); the animals – elks, unicorns and aurochs (large bulls) are described in 6.26-8. An analysis of the types of spaces in Caesar's *Gallic War* is offered by Riggsby (2006) – forests and marshes as dangerous places (25-7); the lack of defined territory of the Germans (61).

achieved his immediate goal – the further away into the wilderness the Suebi go, the more mythical they become. Instead of dispelling the danger as distant and therefore insignificant, Caesar elevates the Suebi into an eternal, timeless enemy and as a result, he implies the heroic status suitable for a general confronting such a great enemy. Although Caesar does not aim to conquer Germany, he succeeds in imposing his presence with spectacularly meaningful actions, such as destroying half of the Roman bridge on the Rhine, to remind the Germans of his menacing presence (6.29). He also includes Germans in his cavalry forces – the renowned bravery of the Germans is made to serve the Roman state and thus even though they remain a mythical menace, they are also shown to be capable of accepting (the new, Caesarean) time.

The peoples living on the island of Britain share similar timelessness to that of the Germans. Therefore, they are also re-created for the Roman audience in a spectacular expedition into the mythical. It is remarkable that Caesar shows interest in the flow and measurements of time precisely whilst in Britain. He mentions a certain island, located between Britain and Ireland, in which there is a month with no daylight during the winter solstice. Caesar orders some ‘accurate measurements’ to be made and concludes that the days in Britain are shorter than those on the continent (5.13). It has rightly been noted that the first and, to certain extent, the second expedition to Britain aim solely at enhancing the Caesarean image of military achievement and daring to discover and face new challenges. Evidence for the publicity value of the expedition is provided by the apparent lack of substantial intelligence and surveillance, Caesar’s neglect of the need for cavalry support and the rather late start of the campaign.<sup>44</sup> The mythologization of the

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<sup>44</sup> Caesar ‘became famous for being the first Roman general to set foot on a distant and little-known land of no political, strategical, or economic value to Rome’ (Sheldon 2005:114). Although he also does not see

territory across the Channel is supported by the common perception at the time that the island stood at the furthest end of the known world. The fighting manner of the Gauls stands out as ancient when confronting the organized, ‘modern’ Roman warfare: they prefer single combat, the challenge of a champion. The Britons, however, display even more antiquated techniques – for example, they use war chariots, thus creating an allusion to ancient Homeric epic battles.<sup>45</sup> The fact that Cicero was inspired and encouraged by Caesar to write an epic about the expeditions to Britain, in co-authorship with his brother Quintus, who served in Caesar’s army, attests to Caesar’s awareness of the enormous propaganda potential of his campaigns on the island.<sup>46</sup>

### **Pompeians = Barbarians?**

The very title of the *Civil War* suggests that the conflict between Caesarean time/civilization and foreign timelessness/chaos could not find direct expression in the work. Nevertheless, the *Civil War* entails a fundamental oxymoronic element, namely that Caesar creates the leitmotif of peaceful resolution in a narrative, entirely founded on his own military offensive.<sup>47</sup> The meaning of the work is in this sense paradoxical,

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any strategic justification of the operation, De Witt (1942:344) believes that the expedition was part of Caesar’s desire to model his career on that of Alexander the Great.

<sup>45</sup> On the epic fighting manner of the Gauls, see Rawson (1978:57); Östenberg (2009:36) claims that during the time of the Late Republic the Gauls, unlike the Britons, considered the battle chariots as status symbols of the nobility.

<sup>46</sup> It remains unclear whether the two brothers worked on a single version; however, given the meagre results of the expedition, it is not surprising that the poem was never published (Allen 1955:156); the Gallic Wars were an inspiration for a *Bellum Sequanicum* by Varro (a single reference for it is found in Priscianus) and possibly a poem by M.Furius Bibaculus (or Furius Alpinus), whose identity is problematic (Allen 1955:143). On the British epic, see also Rawson (1978); on Quintus Cicero’s political ambitions, see Wiseman (1987:34-41).

<sup>47</sup> ‘Far from prosecuting energetic Blitzkrieg, Caesar was not even at war – let alone civil war. Instead, the diplomatic mission to secure fair treatment for himself and his band of triumphant heroes rested on a solid

because Caesar must succeed in transmitting two seemingly incommensurable messages: that the war, as an act of self-defence of his own dignity, is in fact an expression of a constant endeavour to achieve peace; since the military conflict is evident, it is described as the only legitimate Roman war – against a foreign enemy. Thus the creation of an image of equality between being foreign and being an enemy is of primary importance on Caesar's agenda.<sup>48</sup> It is on the basis of this image that Caesar can reveal his own dramatic persona and set it against the *hybris* and irrationality of his adversary.

The personal propaganda aspect is much more important for the *Civil War*. Caesar had many enemies in Rome and although he succeeded in remaining in the centre of political life whilst in Gaul, his image, partially due to his absence, but also due to his own self-mythologization, appeared even more distant and menacing. The Gauls did not fight back on the propaganda level, but there can be no doubt that Roman enemies tried to use the fear of the unknown Caesar: the wave of rumour preceding his arrival in Italy soon turns into panic that he may appear any moment (1.14).<sup>49</sup> However, the evacuation of Italy was to change dramatically the image of Pompey and the Senate. Clearly, the Civil War cannot be treated as a quest against barbarians, but a highly personal conflict against fellow citizens and political opponents. In the *Gallic War*, Caesar could easily identify himself with Rome, but the conflict with the Senate and Pompey's leadership initially situated him on a very unfavourable terrain. The power of Caesar's literary skills,

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bedrock of orderly communications, a word that was his bond, orders that kept the myriads in order' (Henderson 1996:287).

<sup>48</sup> My discussion owes much to the article by Rossi (2000) and the analysis of the military strategies of Caesar and Pompey offered by Goldsworthy (1998).

<sup>49</sup> On allusions of Caesar as Hannibal: Cicero (*Letters to Atticus* (134 (7.11))); Lucan (*Civil War* 1.305, 4.789, 8.286); on Caesar connecting troubles in Gaul with unrest in Rome after the murder of Clodius, see Torigian (1998)); on Caesar's decision not to mention the conference of Luca, in which the triumvirate was informally renewed for another five years, in order to reaffirm the apolitical character of the *Gallic War*, see Riggsby (2006:145).

however, facilitated his gradual engulfing of the Roman identity to a point in which he no longer defended himself and his *dignitas*, but transformed himself into the general defending Rome.<sup>50</sup> The device Caesar uses to dislodge Pompey within the narrative is precisely his speed, which, effectively a manifest control over time, had also overwhelmed the Gauls and Germans. Thus the (already foreign) enemies of Caesar (and Rome) receive the (just) conduct they deserve.

Caesar moves from the west towards the centre (Rome), forcing Pompey to retreat eastwards, across the Adriatic. With Caesar identifying himself with the centre of gravity of the empire, the Pompeians are more easily exposed as marginal to Roman culture. Caesar strives to mythologize the familiar Romans in a manner not unlike his treatment of the completely alien Germans or Britons of the *Gallic War*. After he had imposed Caesarean temporal historical reality onto the west, he aims to achieve the same effect in the east by conquering his already de-Romanized enemies. The spatial-temporal tension is fundamental for Lucan's epic *Civil War* and, as I argue in the next chapter, Lucan's Caesar is defined precisely by his ability to set his control over temporality against Pompey's territorial resources. Moreover, Caesar's appointment as dictator, by the remaining members of the Senate who have not followed Pompey across the Adriatic, allows him to hold elections in order to become a consul and legitimize his power (*Civil War*, 2.21; 3.1). Once he gains a lawful *imperium*, the image of the Pompeians as outlaws, reinforced by their spatial displacement, is complete.<sup>51</sup>

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<sup>50</sup> To attack first and to display the *appearance* of force is decisive for victory and a typical Roman military behaviour; the Romans could not envisage defeat; this is why civil wars had to end with the death of one of the leaders (Goldsworthy 1998:202).

<sup>51</sup> An example of the importance of the lawfulness of state power: Caesar heads toward the Greek town of Oricum; the Pompeian garrison prepares to defend the town, but the Greeks refuse to fight against someone given power by the state (3.11); Appolonia follows Oricum's example (3.12).

Caesar strongly emphasises the foreignness of his Pompeian enemy at numerous points throughout the narrative. In Spain, he ascribes his soldiers' failure to capture a strategic hill to the fact that they are not accustomed to the enemy's peculiar way of fighting, characterized by violent assault in a disorganized barbarian manner. The Pompeians have adopted the fighting methods of the Lusitanian and other tribes, after spending many years of service in their lands (1.44). Towards the end of the narrative, the soldiers commanded by Gabinius in Alexandria are described in similar terms, as being 'accustomed to the lax way of life at Alexandria' (3.110). During the Caesarean blockade at Dyrrhachium, both sides suffer shortages, but the Pompeians are portrayed as being in a worse situation – not only are they hemmed in between the sea and Caesar's fortifications, but they are also not used to the construction work they have to do (3.49); this is another 'eastern symptom', designed to set the Pompeians in opposition to the hard-working Caesareans/Romans. Before the battle at Pharsalus, Caesar takes us to Pompey's camp where the former triumvir shares the command with Scipio, his new father-in-law. While Caesar has been organizing his army, making payments and healing the wounded, the Pompeians have been indulging in arguments about how to exploit their future victory. Various characters, more or less prominent, are quarrelling about future commands and priesthoods (3.83). Meanwhile, in a true Roman military style, Caesar offers battle every day and the lack of reaction on Pompey's part raises the troops' morale (3.84). The battle itself sees the greater numbers of the enemy scattered by the fewer, but more disciplined and courageous Caesareans. The aftermath of Pharsalus confirms the alien image of the enemy: the Caesarean troops find silverware and tents, covered with ivy in the Pompeian camp (3.96). Caesar follows the historical tradition,

according to which such items of luxury are signifiers of exotic abundance and idleness associated with the eastern way of life.<sup>52</sup>

Lastly, an epic device, the catalogue of troops, describes both the vast numbers and ethnic diversity of the enemy. After Caesar sends twelve legions to Brundisium (these are deemed Caesarean, regardless of possible Gallic auxiliaries), the narrator describes Pompey's multi-national forces (infantry and fleet) gathered after a year in the east: nine legions Roman citizens, plus two from Syria and many more allies (3.4-5). The foreign 'supplements' to the Roman legions create an additional sense of disorganization.<sup>53</sup> It is notable that the *Gallic War* also features a catalogue of troops in order to describe the enemy forces: pan-Gallic gathering results in each tribe sending a number of troops to form the relief force to attack the Roman fortifications at Alesia (7.75). The catalogue lacks descriptions of the background and specific abilities of the troops – the narrator offers numbers instead; this apparently pragmatic decision nevertheless achieves its effect to impress by the large number of soldiers gathered from all Gaul, menacing to outnumber the Romans. Both instances demonstrate Caesar's readiness to employ traditional epic and historiographic elements in order to depict his enemies as barbarian forces. In the latter case, he characteristically uses his brevity – by stating numbers, rather than qualities, he emphasizes his own ability to defeat numerous foes.

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<sup>52</sup> Caesar uses this pattern to create an association with Herodotus' description of Mardonius' camp after the Greek victory of Plataea – the Persian camp is abundant with gold, silver, and lavish meals (Rossi (2000:243); Spencer (2002) discusses how for Alexander the Great drunkenness and banquets associated with eastern way of life, dull his perception of time and so he indulges in *timelessness* (96, italics mine); similar timelessness of the Pompeians may be seen as opposed by Caesarean temporality.

<sup>53</sup> Other historians note that Pompey's cavalry was Roman, whereas Caesar avoids mentioning that in order to emphasize the non-Roman identity of the troops. Moreover, Caesar also uses 'barbarian' cavalry forces (Rossi 2000:248-9).



The mythologization of the enemy is also essential for the construction of ‘epic’ Caesar’s image in the *Civil War*. Dealing with de-Romanized Pompeians who initially seem to share the same temporality with Caesar is a complex matter and requires a stronger presence of the ‘dramatic’ Caesar. He faces the *hybristic* emotion of the Pompeians, but only after they have been dislocated and exposed as possessing ‘barbarian’ qualities. It is important that Caesar’s *Civil War* is a conflict in the *guise* of that antagonism between barbarity and civilization. The notion of the ‘eastern’ barbarian as a stereotype is to be recognized instantly both by Caesar’s contemporaries and indeed, ourselves.<sup>54</sup> The dramatic aspect of the antagonism between Caesar and his Pompeian enemies is revealed by the setting of benevolent restraint of Caesar against the excessive emotion of the Pompeians and is subject of discussion in the ‘dramatic’ section below.

### **(Quasi) divine**

The lack of references to the divine powers in the narrative poses a difficulty in defining the degree to which Caesar’s exceptional celerity and resulting omnipresence and power over temporality are granted by the gods or by the *imperium* of the SPQR. As early as Book 1 of the *Gallic War*, Caesar meets one of the chiefs of the Helvetii tribe, who had been responsible for the defeat of Roman generals L. Cassius and L. Piso in 107 BC. To Divico’s refusal to comply with the request for hostages, Caesar replies that the victory fifty years ago and the fact the Helvetii have escaped punishment until now has been according to the intention of the gods who grant success before making people pay

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<sup>54</sup> Hall (1989), *passim*.

for their evils (1.14). The message seems clear: Caesar, acting as the gods' agent, has arrived to deprive the Helvetii of their illusory success.<sup>55</sup>

Since divine providence is also characteristically missing from the narrative of the *Civil War*, Caesar, who since 63 BC has been holding the post of *pontifex maximus*, emerges as ever more subtly ambiguous about his religious stance. In fact, the single occasion in which the gods are mentioned expresses scepticism (albeit perhaps unintentional) regarding the belief in the divine powers or at least the gods external to Rome. While Caesar is occupied by the Pompeian resistance in Spain, his generals Trebonius and Decius Brutus are engaged in the siege of the city of Massilia and in a naval battle against the Massilotes, respectively. The inhabitants of the city pray to the immortal gods for victory (2.5). Although a purely conventional remark, it does stand out in a narrative not mentioning any divine interference. Since the Massilotes are forced to surrender and the city is only spared by Caesar because of its rich historical heritage, the outcome of the conflict implicitly demonstrates the futility of prayers.

In addition to Caesar's subtle attempts to establish himself as the heaven-sent conqueror of Gaul, his successes assist him in establishing another important metaphysical relationship – with Fortune. Elevated to a divine status in republican Rome, Fortune would become definitive for Caesar's image in posterity, carrying both positive and negative connotations related to his character. The image of Caesar as Fortune's favourite would become of prime importance for Lucan's epic *Civil War*, the subject of discussion in the next chapter. Nevertheless, as Caesar's narrative develops, the notion of Fortune is given no more than a few scattered remarks, mainly focusing on the changing fortune of war. In book 3, Caesar, already in Greece, sends envoy to Pompey with

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<sup>55</sup> On Caesar as an agent of the immortal gods and Fortuna in this passage, see Martin (1965:66-67).

proposal for peace; Caesar's message is that both should stop hostilities – after all, 'our own losses have given us enough proof on the power of fortune in war' (3.10). The fact that Caesar is not ready to allow Fortune a more prominent role is revealed in his speech following the defeat at Dyrrachium and anticipating the battle of Pharsalus. Caesar tells his troops that they have been very successful so far and that if events do not turn out favourably, Fortune must be assisted; after all it is his own and the army's effort that would bring the ultimate victory (3.73).<sup>56</sup>

By holding the supreme religious post of *pontifex maximus* while displaying a rather agnostic view of religion, Caesar's persona is exemplary of the intellectual sophistication shared by many of his contemporaries. On the other hand, the lack of reference to the divine is a prerequisite to the creation of an aura of omnipresence – it is niche filled by Caesar who, as the hero of his own work, becomes a quasi-divine figure; this metaphysical status is grounded on the control of time secured by Caesar through his deviant speed.<sup>57</sup>

### **From epic omnipresence to dramatic irony**

Caesar's speed and capability to defy temporal-spatial boundaries lead to a feeling of omnipresence, which is illuminated by the complex relationship between author and character. The hero progresses from possessing *celeritas* towards becoming a personification of time; the quasi-divine omnipresence elevates him to an 'epic' totality of presence and vision, which merges with the *authorial* objectivity. Notwithstanding the

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<sup>56</sup> Caesar relies on the 'credo' that luck helps the brave (Will 2008:91).

<sup>57</sup> The quasi-divinity of Caesar is yet a subtle notion, which at this stage should not necessarily be taken as a premonition of the later emergence of Divus Julius.

superior vantage point of Caesar as the hero, it is Caesar the author who is familiar with the thoughts of the enemy and is capable of surveying the overall theatre of war. As a result, the author colludes with the audience and is able to exercise dramatic irony even towards his own character – there are instances in which the author shares knowledge with the audience, whereas Caesar, ‘epic’ as he might be, is left to work out the situation for himself. In book 4 of the *Gallic War*, the narrator informs us of the crossing of the Rhine and attack on the Menapii by the Usipetes tribe. It is only after the event has been presented that Caesar is seen to receive the report about it. We are not presented with the perspective of the hero Caesar – the narrator follows the sequence of the events, ‘objectively’, in the temporal order as they happen, and shares with us a totality of knowledge.<sup>58</sup>

Moreover, clearly unable to refrain from taking sides, Caesar nevertheless goes to remarkable lengths in order to present the enemy point of view. Even though they are notorious for the lack of reason and judgment, the Gauls naturally oppose slavery; this universal aspect of human nature is acknowledged by Caesar and finds expression in the description and speeches of various Gauls and Germans.<sup>59</sup> However, Caesar’s attempt to acquire the objectivity of the epic narrator disguises the ultimate subjectivity of the author, who presents his own view of history. By simultaneously being the author and protagonist, Caesar subsumes all perspectives and realities of his *Commentaries* and moulds a new authoritative subjectivity which becomes objective.<sup>60</sup> The *Civil War*

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<sup>58</sup> The fact that Caesar shares more with the audience rather than with his subordinates is pointed out by Riggsby (2006: 193).

<sup>59</sup> Noted by Riggsby (2006:116); adopting the Gauls’ point of view, Caesar acknowledges that the Roman system of *amicitia* he is trying to introduce is considered to be a slavery by the Gauls (Seager 2003:23-4).

<sup>60</sup> In fact, Caesar was not alone in his literary activity in Gaul – Welch (1998:86-7) points out that his legates Cotta, Q. Cicero and P. Crassus also wrote reports of the campaigns; therefore, Caesar had to ensure his works would be established as the definitive accounts.

sustains this strategy of objectification, with the fusion of author and character creating a feeling of dramatic irony in which our perception of the hero as omnipresent is influenced by the author's totality of knowledge. The Spanish campaign provides us with an example. As the Caesareans pursue the Pompeians, led by Afranius, back to the city of Illerda, they reach a hill outside the town and are soon subjected to a Pompeian counterattack; although the skirmish continues for five hours, it leads to stalemate. Caesar describes how each party assesses the situation as advantageous: Caesar, because his troops charged valiantly uphill and managed to push the enemy back towards the town; Afranius, because his troops have after all, taken the hill, thus accomplishing the object of the operation. By knowing and revealing to the audience what Afranius thinks, Caesar reinforces the notion of totality of perspective (1.47). Another scene, in which the author demonstrates his awareness of the secret Pompeian plans and anticipates their decisions is the surveillance action taken by Petreius' troops (1.66). Knowledge of the enemy's psychology is a mark of an insightful commander and the fact that the *secret* actions of Petreius are well *known* to Caesar should not necessarily seem paradoxical. However, if the episode is considered as an example of dramatic irony, we can see how by depicting Petreius as an unfortunate character deluded in the secrecy of his thoughts and actions, Caesar expresses his own authorial omnipresence.

After the initial invasion with a single legion, his speed causing turmoil in Italy, Caesar is soon joined by more troops and reaches the town of Corfinium. There, L. Domitius Ahenobarbus – the designated replacement of Caesar as a governor of Gaul – decides to face the outlaw. He fortifies the town, hoping that Pompey will avert from his plans to leave Italy and will support the resistance. At this point, the author reveals to us

events known only to the Pompeians: stating that he is unable to come to his rescue, Pompey advises Domitius to leave the town.<sup>61</sup> Domitius' conduct gives the soldiers grounds to suspect he is planning to save himself; therefore, they begin to negotiate with Caesar and finally surrender their commander. Given the fact that the audience is likely to know how the events would unfold, this psychological touch of suspense, caused by Domitius' undecided fate (1.21), would seem irrelevant.<sup>62</sup> However, the scene can be seen in terms of its dramaturgical value, the strength of its impact defined not by the new content but with the innovative interpretation of the already existing one. In other words, Caesar's aim is engagement of the audience through dramatic irony, rather than surprise.

The sequence of supreme subjectivity – epic objectivity – dramatic irony is indicative of the process of theatricalization of Caesar's works. The next section argues that by interweaving a dramatic layer into his epic protagonist Caesar creates a complex structure to situate his own heroic self as master of time in his works and for the audience.

## **Dramatic effect**

The dramatic aspects of Caesar's works are structured according to the following categories: *performativity* – including the notions of disguising and the gaze (of Caesar,

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<sup>61</sup> Pompey's letter to Domitius (Cicero, *Letters to Atticus* 162B (8.12B); Caesar paraphrases the letter in order to expose Pompey's lack of strategy (Batstone and Damon 2006:163); according to Tyrell (1972), the agenda behind Labienus' betrayal of Caesar was that the legate would convince Pompey to face Caesar's seemingly inferior forces in Italy.

<sup>62</sup> After being spared by Caesar at the capture of Corfinium, as a devoted Pompeian, Domitius haunts the narrative re-appearing again during the siege of Massilia, and later at Pharsalus. He is given a more prominent role by Lucan, possibly on the grounds of his ancestral ties with the emperor Nero (*Civil War* 2.478-525).

the audience and other characters) and speeches; the dramaturgical construction of the narrative to depict *hybris*, which, related to the irrational image of major Pompeian characters, leads to the downfall of the enemy but also to some Caesareans (Sabinus, Curio); scenes of *peripeteia and reversal* in which Caesar establishes his supremacy, particularly prominent in the episodes of Alesia and Pharsalus, which I believe are chosen by Caesar as the culmination of each narrative. Last, but not least, the *missed dramatic opportunities* demonstrate how the huge potential of Caesar's history has been curbed by the author himself in order to fulfil his personal propaganda aims.

### **Performativity and meta-theatricality**

The *Commentaries* employ various dramatic elements as a natural form of communication with the audience: the notions of disguise/acting and acknowledging the gaze of both characters and the audience are evidence of Caesar's acute awareness of the function of meta-theatricality and performativity as means of enriching the narrative.

In *Gallic War* book 3, Caesar's general Sabinus conducts a victorious local campaign against some Gallic tribes. His strategy includes him 'pretending' that he fears a pitched battle against the enemy; he even sends a 'deserter' to convince the Gauls they should use the opportunity to attack. Persuaded by this stratagem (plus their natural wishful thinking, noted by the narrator), the Gauls assail and are surprised by a victorious Roman counterattack (3.17-19). The same strategy is applied by Labienus (5.57-8; 6.8). In the latter scene, the Treveri, relying on expected German allies, are about to attack Labienus who feigns fear and pretends to strike camp. The Gauls fall into the trap –

without waiting for the Germans, they attack Labienus on unfavourable ground and are defeated. Clearly, these should be seen as common strategic approaches designed to deceive the enemy. However, in the light of my discussion of performativity, I believe that scenes with strategic deception reveal the attention Caesar pays to the idea of acting and its use for deception and gathering of intelligence.

The action at Gergovia marks one of the few defeats in Caesar's career. It features acting, which at the onset brings success: Caesar sends people riding cattle, 'masquerading as cavalry' to distract the Gauls towards a ridge in need of protection (7.45); meanwhile, he attacks a wall halfway up the hill towards the town; the soldiers take the wall, but instead of halting, as they have been instructed by Caesar, they rush onwards (7.47). The very fact that they have not followed their commander's order should prepare the audience for the peril awaiting the Romans. The situation worsens when the Aeduian troops arrive to assist the Romans. These are sent by an unexpected route by Caesar and their sudden appearance causes the Romans to mistake them for enemies, disguised as friends (7.50). By showing how familiar strategies that usually bring success can cause confusion and fear, Caesar demonstrates understanding of the different connotations in military tactics of the notion of acting.

Another aspect of performativity is related to the awareness of the existence of an audience. The gaze of the fellow soldiers during the battle action, and on a meta-level – the audience of the *Commentaries* – is definitive for the behaviour of many of Caesar's characters. Most important, of course, is the gaze of the general himself, whose presence is decisive for the victory. Similarly to disguising, the positive and negative implications of performativity are readily recognized by Caesar. He also establishes a link between



overall sense of performativity of war and individual exploits in pursuit of glory, the latter of which allude to epic *aristeia*. This is especially prominent in the *Gallic War*: at Gergovia, the soldiers who at first have the initiative are soon cut away from their comrades and overwhelmed by the defenders of the town. Caesar sends relief troops, but to no avail. To highlight the tragedy, instead of the lack of coordination for which Caesar is also to be blamed, the narrator describes the dramatic death of Petronius – a centurion who realizes that it was his desire to distinguish himself that had caused the disaster (7.59). Of course, Petronius would not have been so reckless if he was not seeking glory to be perceived in the eyes of his comrades, his general and the enemy. An example of individual warriors' exploits is also given earlier in Book 4, after peace negotiations with the Ubii fail and fighting breaks out: Piso, 'a gallant Aquitanian of a very good family', dies protecting his brother; the latter, however, returns to the battlefield to die avenging his kin (4.12). Book 5 features the heroic contest of the two proud centurions Pullo and Vorenus; driven by their desire for glory, each one tries to kill more enemies than the other; they end up valiantly saving each other's lives (5.44). The Caesarean general G. Scribonius Curio's campaign in the *Civil War* also offers an *aristeia*-like moment highlighting the epic impulse of the initial victory: a Caesarean soldier – Fabius – attempts to kill the Pompeian commander Varus; he calls his name a few times until Varus finally goes in the direction of the person calling. Fabius is killed, but not before he manages to wound the Pompeian (2.35).

Caesar displays an ambiguous attitude towards the positive value of individual quest for glory and, as we shall see below, he emphasizes its naturally strong connection to *hybris*. However, it is important that Caesar also acknowledges its performativity – the

soldiers' glory acquires meaning only when observed; the notion of performance in battle is not restricted to individuals and its variations are explored throughout the narrative.

After Vercingetorix successfully avoids a pitched battle against Caesar, he retreats in the well-defended town of Alesia (*Gallic War*, book 7). The Roman commander begins the construction of his habitual fortifications and siege works, but this time he creates an additional, outer line of defence, aimed to stop the relief force expected to gather from all parts of Gaul. The Gauls decide to send the civilian populace out of the town in order to minimize the consumption of supplies. The innocent civilians plead to be admitted in Caesar's camp, but are refused entry (7.78). Alesia would not take back its inhabitants either and the starving people remain caught in a no man's land, as a dreadful spectacle visible to both Roman and Gallic eyes. Another spectacle seen by everyone is the ensuing battle: at the fortifications at Alesia, both sides follow the action on the battlefield below thus creating an allusion to the rather more personal, yet spectacularly visible fight between Hector and Achilles, observed by the horrified eyes of both Argives and Trojans.

When the united tribes of Gaul attack a remote Roman post on a slope, the besieged troops attempt a sortie, and soon the Romans are hemmed in between two battlefields. Caesar finds an observation point to oversee all action and dispatches his best colleagues Labienus and Decimus Brutus to the critical areas (7.85). Whereas in the above-mentioned battle, everyone except the fighting parties acted as a spectator, in the following scene there is a notable gradual change of perspectives – Caesar emerges as the only one who observes. Performance requires the presence of an audience and Caesar's soldiers are no exception – they *perform* remarkably well under the gaze of their

commander – the narrator reminds us of the omnipresence of Caesar while also emphasizing the performative/theatrical nature of the war.<sup>63</sup>

During a battle against the Menapii, Labienus makes a speech, in which he evokes the gaze of the general and encourages the soldiers to fight as if Caesar is present and watching (*Gallic War* 6.8) Labienus is the only character to ‘conjure up’ the gaze of the commander, Caesar thus emphasizing the strong connection between himself and his legate. This point is important, because at the onset of the civil conflict, Labienus changes allegiances and joins Pompey, adding dramaturgical complexity to the character when assessed in retrospect. The depiction of Labienus by Caesar is discussed in more detail below – for now it will suffice to note that Labienus would not evoke the gaze of Pompey; such an invocation remains unique for Caesar’s power.

At Alesia, after securing all defences, Caesar orders the cavalry to engage the enemy: ‘our’ horsemen, supported by the German cavalry, manage to rout the Gauls and to pursue them back to their camp. The performativity of the battle is once again acknowledged by the narrator, who comments that the desire for glory and the fear of shame are in every soldier’s heart (7.80). A similar reference, albeit Pompeian, is presented in the *Civil War*: when the Pompeians decide against night action, they do so not only because of Caesar’s superiority in conducting such operations – they assume it is easier for the soldiers in civil war to change allegiance or/and desert under the cover of night; this cannot be done in daylight, when the gaze of everyone would impose a sense of shame (1.67). Such an attitude is exemplary of Caesar’s understanding of the complex

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<sup>63</sup> Thus Riggsby (2006:92): ‘...the gaze that brings out *virtus* (and so success) is especially one from above’. Riggsby also discusses the element of surveillance and the gaze of the colonizer, demonstrated by Caesar in his geographical and ethnographic descriptions. The point made by Davidson (1991) in relation to Polybius’ *Histories* can also be applied to the reception of Caesar’s works: they entail ‘...concentric circles of spectators, from the combatants in the centre to the remote reader in the twentieth century’ (16).

effects of performativity, especially in a civil conflict when ‘participants’ and ‘audience’ could easily change places.

Ancient history employs direct and reported speech in order to convey the details of a given situation, character and atmosphere. The use of speeches entails both a dramatic construction of a character and a dramaturgical framework, coexisting with history as part of the canon. Caesar clearly regards speeches to be equally important for his *Commentaries* as for any other *historia*.<sup>64</sup> The speeches written by Caesar and spoken by the character Caesar, regardless of their form as *oratio recta* or *oratio obliqua*, are focal points of the self-dramatization of the author; they reflect the epic-dramatic nature of Caesar and vocalize the thoughts and intentions of the character, in its epic emanation presenting a quasi-divine control of time, and in the dramatic – a rational, humane, and dignified commander. The speeches operate on a complex combination of narrative and meta-narrative levels. Although both direct and reported speeches have equal importance, I suggest a consideration of the former as having a stronger connection and impact on the character, whereas the latter is meaningful for the self-presentation of the author.

The major point regarding Caesar’s use of *oratio recta* is that it consists of a single remarkable example. Despite the pronounced progression towards more frequent use of direct speech in the *Civil War*, there is only one such instance by Caesar himself, a precedent for both works;<sup>65</sup> appropriately, it is reserved for the culmination of the narrative – anticipating the battle of Pharsalus: ‘We must postpone our march for the time

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<sup>64</sup> Murphy (1949) concludes that the frequency of indirect speeches in the *Gallic War* conforms to its proper nature as *Commentarii* – Caesar provides raw material for future historians to compose direct speeches; however, in my view, indirect speeches should not be dismissed on the grounds of their instrumental purpose and should be accepted as valuable in their own merit.

<sup>65</sup> The ratio of direct to indirect speeches increases from one to seven in the *Gallic War* to one to four in the *Civil War* (noted by Rowe 1967:399).

being and think of battle, just as we have always desired. Our spirits are ready for battle; we shall not easily find another chance' (3.85). This speech perfectly suits Caesar's characteristic (winning) combination of brevity and speed – it is delivered '...when the column was already going through the gates [of the camp]' (*ibid.*). The sense of haste does not interfere with the Caesarean discipline and reflects entirely the character of the general. Caesar's address is notably short and stands in contrast to the preceding lengthier ones delivered by Pompey and Labienus *in consilio* before the battle. The elaborate speeches of the enemy emphasize their military zeal whereas by putting less emphasis on the battle exhortation, Caesar conveys his unwillingness to fight fellow citizens. However, he also subtly demonstrates that his troops hardly need any encouragement – under Caesar's command they are ready for battle anytime.<sup>66</sup>

Direct speeches in the *Gallic War* and *Civil War* are inserted at moments when the action reaches a high dramatic point. The *Gallic War* features only two such addresses, notably longer and more descriptive than the Caesarean exhortation quoted above; both are delivered by Gauls.<sup>67</sup> The *Civil War* includes a number of direct speeches, all but the one quoted above delivered by Caesar's enemies. The medium of speech once again unites Gauls, Germans and Pompeians – the enemy voice is more ornamented and almost excessively rhetorical. Thus, Caesar's address at Pharsalus

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<sup>66</sup> It is precisely the troops' willingness to fight exploited and encouraged by Caesar that would inspire Lucan to present the same event seen in the light of the soldiers' fanatical devotion (Lucan, *Civil War* 7.250-328); Nordling (2004) finds the power of the speech to be in its irony: 'I regret to inform you, boys, that today's inspiring series of marches shall have to be cancelled in favour of a battle...' (186); the contrast between Caesar's brief exhortation and the elaborated speeches of the Pompeians is pointed out by Hansen (1993:171).

<sup>67</sup> One remarkable example is Critognatus' passionate speech, in which he encourages the besieged in Alesia to have faith in their countrymen's arrival but dramatically announces they should rather eat their fellow men than surrender (7.77).

demonstrates the importance of brevity and frankness in contrast to the enemy bombast, meaningless oaths and self-deception.

Despite the negative connotations of their speeches, by allowing his characters to speak directly, Caesar grants them a seemingly ‘independent’ voice. With the single exception of the Pharsalus speech, Caesar speaks indirectly by reporting his own statements. His apparent preference for expressing his own words as *oratio obliqua* highlights the somehow ironic, but fundamental point that the whole narrative should be treated as the indirect speech of Caesar the author. Caesar integrates himself within the text and it matters little whether he speaks *obliqua* or *recta*. Indirect speech emerges as a more intuitively ‘natural’ means of self-expression of an author who plays the leading role in his own narrative and is no less dramatic than direct addresses.<sup>68</sup> Caesar allows the other characters more ‘stage time’ in the form of speeches, but since these are included in his great reported speech, the narrative itself subtly underlines Caesar’s ultimate subjectivity and authorial omnipresence.

In his numerous reported speeches, Caesar carefully places statements which underline his epic-dramatic qualities. Having discussed his only direct speech, I shall now give some examples from the same work, the *Civil War*, in order to illustrate the contribution of reported speeches to the character’s claims for justice and mercifulness.

Caesar’s address to the troops before the initial invasion, asking them to defend his reputation (1.7) is an interesting counterbalance to the brief address at Pharsalus. Although it is a sort of battle exhortation, its indirect, literary form allows it to acquire political aspects, taking the attention away from the conflict and focusing it onto Caesar’s

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<sup>68</sup> Caesar employs dramatic *oratio obliqua*, which is ‘...a deliberately artistic statement which, though indirect, is yet rhetorical, and which has the impact and associations of the speech form’ (Miller 1975:49).

self-justification. It is also a good opportunity for the author to summarize the history of the conflict. After Pompey's departure to Greece, Caesar arrives in Rome for the first time since the crossing of the Rubicon and summons the (remaining members of the) Senate; he *reports* himself asking them to join him in governing Rome; should 'timidity' make them refuse the task, then Caesar would govern by himself (1.32). Caesar boldly states that his aim is to 'outdo others in justice and equity' as he has 'previously striven to outdo them in achievement' (1.32). At Corfinium, Caesar orders all senators to be led out of the city; he lets them go free, leaving them to ponder over the fact that 'he had received no thanks from them for the great benefits he had bestowed on them...' (1.23). The link established between Caesar's conquest of Gaul and the unjust treatment of his persona underlines the historical continuity of the two works.

With their higher degree of self-justification in comparison to the *Gallic War*, Caesar's speeches in the *Civil War*, notwithstanding their *obliqua* form, challenge the borderline between author and character and allow Caesar to express himself in a more dramatic way. In the final stages of the Spanish campaign, after a series of skirmishes, with their way towards an important mountain pass cut off, Afranius and Petreius seek conference with Caesar. No doubt anticipating that their defeat is to be dramatized, they ask to speak to him in private in order to avoid disgrace. However, Caesar deliberately chooses a spot in public, 'in the hearing of both armies' (1.84); the audience has gathered not only to see how the proud Pompeians will accept the defeat, but also to hear a speech by Caesar (1.85). Although he accuses the Pompeians of avoiding peace, Caesar announces that he is not intending to humiliate them; his only requirement is to disband the armies they have mustered and maintained against him for many years.

The scenes discussed above demonstrate that whereas the direct address reflects Caesarean brevity and speed, the reported speeches, used to point out the injustice he is suffering and often followed by acts of mercy, add an element of rhetorical self-justification in Caesar's narrative.

### **Dramatic ambiguity of emotion – characters, *hybris* and *peripeteia***

Although he characteristically acts as an embodiment of reason, emotion is vital for Caesar's image as a character and author. The *Commentaries* are saturated with different emotions and, more importantly, are aimed at evoking such emotions in the audience, thus confirming the theatrical connotations of the works.<sup>69</sup> In the *Gallic War* Caesar transforms a state and public (subject) matter of governing a province and military operations into a personal quest of epic glory. The *Civil War* presents the direct opposite: the personal crisis of Caesar's political position evolves into an issue, involving the whole state. In both works, Caesar aims to expose the irrationality of his enemies thus diverting the attention of the audience away from his own emotional and subjective involvement, which could perhaps appear equally irrational and 'barbarian' seen from another point of view. Caesar's concealed emotions generate both real action and written *Commentaries*, cast a shadow over the convenient polarity of foreign passions versus Roman reason, and demonstrate the importance of re-evaluating cultural assumptions in the light of their performative qualities. In the section on epic Caesar, I have already

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<sup>69</sup> Instead of using adjectives to depict emotion, Caesar uses abstract nouns, such as 'fear', rather than 'fearful': '[T]his preference aligns itself with a strategic preference for the general or abstract over the particular and concrete' (Batstone and Damon 2006: 154); also, Caesar can 'deploy symbol and imagery for emotional effect' (151). On the rhetorical devices as Caesarean 'effects', see Batstone and Damon (2006:156-8).



outlined the polarity, which Caesar creates between himself and his soldiers and the Pompeians, who are depicted as foreign to Rome. The following section discusses in more detail the dramatic facets of the dynamic relationship between Caesarean restraint and the emotional excess of the enemy.

Book 1 of the *Gallic War* introduces a Gallic ‘friend’ of Caesar (and Rome) – Diviciacus of the Aedui tribe, the main allies of the Romans. Diviciacus’ brother and *alter ego* Dumnorix – a malevolent character who conspires against the Romans – is chiefly responsible for the delayed grain supply for Caesar’s army. In a possible allusion to the oligarchy reigning in late Republican Rome, the narrator explains that Dumnorix is a powerful individual, ruling over the (Aeduan) Senate. Caesar meets Diviciacus and asks him to take measures against his brother. The meeting is emotional and on the verge of melodrama: weeping, Diviciacus embraces Caesar and explains that if he accuses his brother he would make himself unpopular in Gaul.<sup>70</sup> Holding the Gaul’s hand, Caesar tells him that he will deal with the problem, even though this would mean swallowing his own indignation and overlooking the Roman interests (1.20). By paying attention to detail and physical proximity, Caesar creates a scene, in which friendship seems to dominate, the general almost casting aside his proconsular insignia in order to stand equal to the Gaul. Diviciacus appears in another emotional episode: following a pan-Gallic conference, representatives of various tribes visit Caesar and ask him for help against the Germans (1.31-33). The latter, initially hired as mercenaries by the Sequani, terrorize the inhabitants in a wide area of Gaul. Diviciacus speaks in a dramatic scene, in which he once again cries. The representatives from the Sequani, also present at the meeting,

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<sup>70</sup> Murphy (1949:124) suspects that Diviciacus ‘...must have been a practised “tear-jerker”’ and analyses the episode in the light of Caesar’s use of rhetoric devices to evoke pity.

cannot utter a word, despite Caesar insisting on their explanation – they are too terrified to raise their voice against Ariovistus, the fierce German chief. This psychological sketch is drawn with a dramaturgical skill: the fact that the Sequani are unable even to lift their eyes to look on Caesar evokes pity – their ordeal becomes even more tragic, because they are both the cause and the victims of the German terror in Gaul. The following scenes, describing the campaign against Ariovistus, do not present such emotional peaks since Caesar aims to portray the Germans as more arrogant in comparison with his Gallic ‘friends’. By depriving Ariovistus of the ability to evoke the compassion of the audience and encouraging a dislike of his arrogance instead, Caesar successfully alienates the German chief. However, he is aware of the drawbacks of the impossibility of identification between Romans and enemy, which may cause terror from the unknown. Therefore, when his troops at Vesontio are frightened by rumours about the fierceness of the Germans, Caesar stirs their patriotism and bravery by reminding them how the Teutoni and Cimbri have been dispelled before (1.39-41).<sup>71</sup>

Gauls tend to receive either more dispassionate or, when allies (for example, the case of Diviciacus), benevolent treatment by Caesar; however, book 8 of the *Gallic War* displays a different attitude. Although Hirtius imitates the Caesarean style well, the way the emotions of the Gauls and Caesar himself are depicted clearly betrays the different authorship of the book. In 8.44, the Gaul Lucterius earns Caesar’s hatred and is forced to keep on the move to escape from the general; such strong feelings are habitually omitted by Caesar, who generally presents himself as moderate and benign. Hints of disdain, such as the description of Gallic warriors who flee ‘...like cowards’ (8.13) are scarcely found

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<sup>71</sup> Chrissanthos (2001) treats this event as an actual mutiny against Caesar’s command; see James (2000) for a detailed analysis of the episode.

in Caesar's narrative. By evoking pity for the suffering Gauls, Caesar often subtly avoids revealing any elements of cruelty that may spoil his image of benevolent commander. It is difficult to quell rebellions and repel invasions without violence, but Caesar is sensitive to the fine line between necessary violence and cruelty, and avoids detailed descriptions of Roman aggression. In contrast, Hirtius includes a rather grim episode: following the capture of Uxellodunum, all men who had borne arms have their hands cut off (8.44). Whether this punishment was dispassionately seen by Caesar as necessity, or was an expression of cruelty, remains a matter of speculation. The more important question, namely whether Caesar would have chosen to include this episode in his own narrative, is probably resolved by the very fact that he chose not to write book 8 at all.

Throughout books 1-7 of the *Gallic War*, Caesar strives to present himself as the leader of the civilizing Roman force, who although somewhat dispassionately, nevertheless understands human weaknesses. The emotional charge of the work is dispersed within the dramatic scenes, the epic perspectives of author/narrator, and the shrewd omnipresence of the hero. In comparison with the *Gallic War*, the *Civil War* is a narrative with a distinctively higher degree of personal involvement. Although the author attempts to play down the impact of his personal indignation, this is the emotion that drives him into action against authority and defines the whole narrative. The *character* Caesar acts reasonably and somewhat impassively, while the *author's* eyes are blazing with epic fire.<sup>72</sup> The next section looks into the Pompeian display of irrationality, especially excessive anger, opposed to Caesar's control of his own emotions.

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<sup>72</sup> Lucan would capture this energy – in my treatment of the poem, Caesar's *furor* is at the heart of his celerity and control of temporality.

Marcus Bibulus features in the *Civil War* as one of the most ruthless Pompeians. Unfortunate to have shared aedileship, praetorship and consulship with Caesar, he had been completely overshadowed both on the public entertainment front and in the Senate.<sup>73</sup> We are introduced to Bibulus as the person in charge of the Pompeian fleet in the Adriatic. In order to undermine his adversary's authority, Caesar skilfully marks his first appearance by a *failure* to intercept Caesar's transports crossing over to Greece. Emphasizing his own speed, Caesar informs us that after disembarking he sends the ships back to Italy the same night (3.8). Finally, Bibulus reacts and intercepts the returning ships, capturing thirty of them and, in a rather irrational outburst, burning the ships together with their crews. When the Pompeians try to secure a truce by pretending to organize peace negotiations with Pompey himself, a meeting between Caesar and a Pompeian delegation takes place. Bibulus refuses to participate, claiming that he would not be able to behave himself in Caesar's presence, because of the hatred he feels towards his former colleague (3.16). Later, Bibulus dies on his ship, having caught an illness but being unable to reach the mainland. By giving this character a prominent role, Caesar demonstrates that his enemies are driven by personal hatred rather than a commitment to the so-called republican cause.

On one occasion during the Spanish campaign, the Pompeian generals Petreius and Afranius leave the camp to supervise the construction of a rampart; meanwhile, soldiers from the two armies begin to fraternize (1.74). The reaction of Petreius is to order the killing of Caesar's friendly troops who had been allowed to enter his camp. What follows is a somehow melodramatically emotional scene, in which Petreius, after the ruthless killing of fellow Romans, 'weeping' asks his troops to swear an oath to

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<sup>73</sup> For a discussion of Bibulus' career, see Gray-Fow (1990).

Pompey (1.75-6).<sup>74</sup> Needless to say, Caesar not only allows the Pompeians in his camp to return to theirs, but also welcomes those willing to change allegiance. His sober and humane conduct exposes the Pompeian irrationality, a possible sign of foreignness and barbarity.

At the onset of the civil conflict, Caesar's trusted legate in Gaul – Titus Labienus – changes allegiances and joins Pompey. Labienus demonstrates an unexpected degree of authority by organizing everyone to swear an oath to Pompey (3.13) and during an attempt for peace negotiations prompted by Caesar he declares that until Caesar's head is delivered to them, there can be no peace (3.19). Interestingly, he is attacked by missiles 'from all directions'; Caesar here insinuates that disloyalty is hated by all and Labienus enjoys a false authority. Not unlike Bibulus, Labienus indulges in angry outbursts and ruthless treatment of prisoners: after Caesar's defeat at Dyrrachium, he displays the captured Caesareans, insults them and orders their execution '...to strengthen the Pompeians' trust in himself as a deserter' (3.71). The man, possibly named as a potential consular colleague of Caesar, acquires an image of a traitor that remains for posterity. The Pompeians' highly emphasized performative irrationality, often on the edge of overacting, creates a sense of artificiality suggesting that they might have been traitors all the way through. Caesar does not offer any explanation of the grounds of Labienus' treachery; by not being able to assess his motivation, we are encouraged to contemplate

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<sup>74</sup> Since no other historian mentions Pompeian oaths, they could be seen as Caesar's attempt to show the constant need of his enemies to re-confirm their devotion to the cause (Damon 1993: 183-195). Caesar's denial of civil war is expressed by the fact that wherever he is, there are attempts to fraternize and negotiate; the characteristic lack of graphic depiction of death can be ascribed to the same strategy (Henderson 1996: 261-288).

the turncoat Labienus almost as a theatrical persona hidden behind a mask, a mask he had possibly worn during his service in Gaul too.<sup>75</sup>

So far, I have avoided discussing the image of Pompey, precisely because his character lacks the rash irrationality and emotion of Bibulus and Labienus who uncannily emerge as more vicious adversaries. Indeed, by depicting Pompey as an almost depersonalized presence diffused in the term ‘Pompeians’, Caesar carefully avoids the demonizing of his adversary.<sup>76</sup> Pompey’s strategically valid decision to retreat at the beginning of the conflict, when he realizes the inadequacy of the troops at his disposal in Italy, in fact costs him the whole war. Once dislocated, Pompey is transformed by Caesar into the very eastern menace he had been conquering throughout his career. However, it is only at Pharsalus that Caesar finally focuses his attention on his former associate – his vain confidence, subsequent losing of heart and spectacularly fast flight stand almost as an anti-climax to the tension build-up from the beginning of the work. The great enemy of Caesar is revealed to be a man hiding behind an impressive façade, accusing his own associates of betrayal although he is the first to flee (3.96). The literary attack on Pompey is concluded by the description of luxury and ‘indications of extravagant indulgence and confidence in victory’ of his camp at Pharsalus (3.96). The alienation of the enemy entails passionate aggression, irrationality and a luxurious lifestyle.

It can only be speculated to what extent the audience ‘believed’ in the characterization of the Pompeians. Even Caesar’s literary skill could not ensure a

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<sup>75</sup>On Labienus’ possible consulship, see Tyrell (1972); Caesar’s continuators maintain the portrayal of Labienus – for example, a theatrical scene in the African war presents him confronting veterans from the famous tenth legion, once commanded by Labienus himself (*African War* 16). Caesar’s depiction of Labienus is discussed in Batstone & Damon (2006: 106-109); the oxymoron of Labienus as the turncoat, trying to persuade the Pompeians of his good faith is noted by Damon (1993:188).

<sup>76</sup>Caesar’s reverence for Pompey the Great continued after the war; Cicero remarked that by preserving Pompey’s statues in Rome, Caesar has secured his own (Plutarch 57).

complete fusion of characters and people, historical for us, but made of flesh and blood for his contemporaries. In fact, the enemy's simultaneous existence as characters and real persons is of crucial importance for Caesar's ideological project and is the subject of discussion in the last section of this chapter.

Following these individual instances of enemy irrationality, I proceed to investigate certain dramaturgical constructions aimed to present dramatic Caesar as reasonable and virtuous, namely scenes in which the emotion of *hybris* is presented as an outcome of irrationality.<sup>77</sup> Caesar does not depict *hybris* which affects the enemy exclusively; therefore, three types of *hybristic* situations in relation to the proximity/distance from Caesar can be described: (1) Curio – a Caesarean character showing *hybris* in a setting located away from the direct control of Caesar; (2) Sabinus – another Caesarean character whose defeat is contrasted to the case of Quintus Cicero, who although facing Gallic attack in similar circumstances, does not fail to comply with Caesar's orders; (3) episodes of danger and suspense for the Caesareans (and effectively a demonstration of enemy *hybris*) which are followed by victory; these episodes exemplify the author's use of the dramatic technique of *peripeteia*/reversal thus reaffirming dramatically Caesar's supremacy and ambiguous quasi-divine image. The culmination scenes of each work – Alesia and Pharsalus – follow similar dramaturgical logic and serve as examples.

Caesar did not jeopardize the historical value of his work and included the episodes describing the failure of his generals – Sabinus and Curio – which provide him with opportunities for tragic highlights whilst retaining the victorious image of the

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<sup>77</sup> The importance of *hybris* in the *Civil War* is notably examined by Rowe (1967) who points out the role of good fortune for creating confidence and pride, the common reason for downfall.

Caesareans. The story of the defeat of Sabinus, taking place upon Caesar's return from Britain is one of the more widely recognized dramatic scenes in the *Gallic War* (5.24-37).<sup>78</sup> After deceiving (in a long speech) the Romans in his goodwill, Ambiorix from the tribe of the Eburonians expresses his desire to help Sabinus by informing him that a large German force is preparing to attack the camp. He advises the Romans to withdraw towards the legions of Cicero or Labienus, stationed at some distance from each other. In what may be seen as another ambiguous parallel to Roman politics, Ambiorix states his personal unwillingness to wage war against the Romans, but that it is the power of his people that had instigated the conflict (5.27). In a scene of argument between the officers of the camp, the characters of Cotta and Sabinus are established (5.28-31): Sabinus, who had skilfully deceived the Gauls earlier (3.17-19), now fails to foresee the peril and agrees to follow the Gallic 'advice'; Cotta is the prudent subordinate officer, a true Roman distrustful of the enemy. However, Cotta is forced to give in to his superior's decision and the Romans prepare to leave the camp. Everyone – the narrator, the audience and the characters (minus Sabinus) – knows what is at hand. The tragedy unfolds with the inevitable ambush, followed by a fight lasting for hours, the Romans eventually forming a circle in a desperate attempt to defend their lives. Finally, the tragic end comes – some choose to commit suicide, while others, including Cotta, fight to their last breath; a few soldiers escape and reach Labienus, positioned in the vicinity (5.35-37). Sabinus meets his deserved demise in an undignified attempt to negotiate surrender with Ambiorix.

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<sup>78</sup> Instead of playing down the defeat, Caesar creates an episode of high drama. Powell (1998:116-22); Welch (1998:95) compares the episode to Livy's account of the battle of Cannae. The episode is also noted by Wiseman (1998(a):6).



Another incident taking place in identical circumstances stands as a direct opposite to the above scene. The Gauls apply similar strategy to deceive Quintus Cicero, whose legion is stationed in the area. When Cicero declares he does not accept terms from armed men, Ambiorix orders an attack (5.41). In a remarkable demonstration of their ability to adopt the Roman ways of war, the Nervii besiege the camp.<sup>79</sup> The more dangerous the situation becomes, the more urgent is the need for Caesar's appearance. The dramatic suspense is heightened by a communication breakdown: the messenger sent by Caesar to assure Cicero that help is on the way fails to enter the camp; he fixes the message onto a spear and throws it towards the camp; the javelin hits the fortifications, but the note remains unnoticed for two days and is found on the very day of Caesar's arrival on the wings of victory (5.48).

In book 2 of the *Civil War*, the ex-Pompeian army, which has sworn allegiance to Caesar in Corfinium, is put straight into action under the command of Curio. A relatively recently converted supporter of Caesar, he had been advocating his cause in the Senate in the last months before the war. Young and ambitious, Curio transports the troops from Sicily to Africa and begins an ill-fated campaign against P. Attius Varus. After an initial success, Curio decides to besiege the city of Utica. However, it is rumoured that the African king Juba is advancing as a relief to the enemy; after questioning several prisoners who apparently confirm earlier information that Juba had sent only a part of his army, 'Curio's hopes...were matched by the zeal of his troops' (2.39). He attacks with Gallic and Spanish cavalry, but many of the horsemen, tired from the previous action, are soon routed by the enemy. It becomes clear that king Juba is, after all, advancing with

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<sup>79</sup> Caesar does not miss the opportunity to demonstrate the contrast between the Gallic siege towers and ramparts and the fact that they dig the earth with their bare hands, carrying soil in their cloaks (5.42).

overwhelming number of troops and Curio's army soon faces a fight for survival. Amidst general panic and grief, an officer asks Curio to retreat under the protection of his officers (2.42). The young commander declares that he could not face Caesar after such defeat and bravely continues fighting until he is killed.<sup>80</sup>

Curio's defeat is a disaster: there is general panic in the camp, some of the soldiers surrender to Varus, while others flee to Sicily. However, the audience learn that upon his arrival in Utica, king Juba starts giving orders to Varus himself who, overwhelmed by the power of the arrogant barbarian king, does not dare to oppose him (2.44). The effect is twofold: Juba is depicted as a common enemy to the Romans, which awkwardly unites Pompeians and Caesareans; but at the same time, contrasted with Varus' submission to the barbarian, Curio's defeat is elevated into a heroic resistance to barbarian power. Nevertheless, since North Africa remains in firm control of the Pompeians for another two years, Curio's defeat has long-term consequences. Caesar does not deny the failure of his general but through his ability to re-create it dramatically he leaves a lasting impression and adds another dimension to the civil conflict – the necessity for revenge.

Curio's youthful zeal is understood by Caesar and might have been approved in other circumstances; in Africa, he had clearly demonstrated *hybris* and rashness of judgement. And yet, Curio has been left on his own devices – on a different continent, and far from the direct control of Caesar. The two episodes from the *Gallic War* described above demonstrate how obeying or disobeying the general's orders affects the dramatic status of the characters. The arrival of Caesar brings reversal and victory, and therefore marks a crucial element in the dramatic action. Although the deaths in Sabinus'

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<sup>80</sup> On Caesar's portrayal of Curio, see Batstone & Damon (2006:95-101).

camp are tragic, there is no doubt that the desired effect on the audience is to feel the absence of pity. Fear is a more palpable effect, although it is difficult to estimate whether it should be caused by the enemy or the inevitable wrath of Caesar. Sabinus' attempts to bargain his fate instantly deprive him of the admiration we are ready to grant Cotta and indeed, Curio. Quintus Cicero is dutiful and earns our respect; however, it is Caesar, who as *deus ex machina* solves the crisis and sustains his quasi-divine image in the dramatic frame.

The third type of dramatic construction, revealed in both the *Gallic* and *Civil Wars*, follows the logic of reversal/*peripeteia* with Caesar present in the crisis and the reversal. Although even the literary prowess of Caesar could not structure history to fit a specific pattern, it is tempting to envisage a parallel between the depiction of action at Gergovia and Alesia with that of Dyrrachium and Pharsalus.

After six books/years of restless campaigning against the Gauls, Caesar finally faces all Gallic tribes, united by Vercingetorix. Even the Aedui, the loyal allies of the Romans, are lured by the dream of freedom conjured up by the young but ruthless warrior. Since Vercingetorix is determined to defeat the Romans once and for all, Caesar is finally opposed by someone with a similar willpower to his own. Resolved even to apply the 'scorched earth' policy – to burn all his grain and forage – in order to deprive the Romans of supplies, Vercingetorix emerges as the perfect enemy for the Roman General and, as it has been rightly suggested, he stands very much as a creation of Caesar.<sup>81</sup>

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<sup>81</sup> Will (2008:56-71) treats the historical person Vercingetorix as almost completely substituted by the character created by Caesar.

The unsuccessful attack of Gergovia is the crisis, in which Caesar's troops, carried away in their zeal for victory jeopardize the whole operation and evoke Caesar's reproach. An important episode, it is treated by the author as a dramaturgical low point before the glorious victory at Alesia. At Alesia Caesar appears on a high ground, suitable for his epic nature and, being able to observe everything and everyone, manifests his omnipresence. Moreover, the epic commander reveals himself in a dramatic visual move – he rushes onwards, towards the most dangerous point of battle among his troops, where the glimpse of his scarlet cloak is a premonition of doom for the Gauls, turning the gravest danger into victory.<sup>82</sup> Caesar's physical presence brings death and defeat: together with the general, a Roman cavalry force attacks the Gallic rearguard – the Gauls are scattered and turned into flight. Resolution and conclusion come on the next day, when Vercingetorix, crestfallen, but dignified, surrenders. For Caesar, the aftermath of the Roman victory consists of facts and a distinctive lack of emotion – the laconic style of writing is most meaningful and the words are a palpable hit on the mind of the audience. Caesar skilfully returns to the war report style with the clear intention to emphasize that the omnipresent epic hero, after all, simply performs his duty: 'Vercingetorix was delivered up, and the arms laid down'.<sup>83</sup> It has been noted that Book 7 of the *Gallic War* marks a more heightened dramatic tension in comparison with the previous books and it may plausibly be considered as complete dramatic structure, in which 'Caesar employs

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<sup>82</sup> 'The battle reaches its climax, until in a sharp *staccato* come the brief sentences, like blows that hammer defeat into victory'; 'there is hardly a word that is not pure prose, but the effect is epic' (Adcock 1956: 68).

<sup>83</sup> The brevity of the scene of Vercingetorix's surrender should be seen as set in contrast to the long and detailed account of Pompey's victory over Tigranes, narrated by the historian Theophanes (not extant, but mentioned in Plutarch's work) (Will 2008:70-71).

the dramatist's technique of representing through action instead of describing through exposition'.<sup>84</sup>

Similar construction presents the culmination of the *Civil War*. The common opinion that the Gauls are reckless and treacherous people is employed by Caesar to serve as a good excuse for his failures: Pompey's plans to break through the Caesarean blockade at Dyrrachium are assisted by the desertion of two brothers from the Allobroges tribe, initially given a prominent position among Caesar's associates and possessing strategic knowledge (3.59). 'Armed' with the important information, Pompey attacks a section of incomplete fortifications by sea and land. Despite the joint efforts of Caesar and Mark Antony, the Pompeians are successful and head towards an old camp in the vicinity. Caesar attempts to take the camp – after his initial success, there is a reversal of fortune (3.68) and at this point Caesar remarks on the importance of Fortune in warfare: occasionally small things cause big changes, and one should always expect the unexpected. After the cavalry fails to assist the infantry already trapped in beyond the walls of the camp, there is a general panic and although Caesar attempts to halt the fleeing soldiers, they drop their standards and pay no attention to him (3.69). The general's inability to stop the panic of his own soldiers marks the lowest point of the narrative. Nevertheless, we should be cautious of Caesar's apparent honesty, which serves the purpose to (re)create him as a dramatic character: the fact that he highlights his complete loss of authority with such readiness prepares the audience for the importance

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<sup>84</sup> Kahn (1971:251). Kahn treats the narrative as a five-act play, consisting of prologue, three episodes, and exode, extending the dramaturgical connotations to consider the council meetings as substitutes for choral odes. According to him Caesar 'follows Homer and anticipates Shakespeare' (251); as noted by DeWitt (1942:350-1) and Adcock (1956:64-5), changes of style and the formality of book 1, contrasted to the high speed action and theatricality of book 7, should be taken as proof of the *seriatim* composition of the *Gallic War*; the subject of composition of the works is considered in the final section of this chapter.

of the imminent reversal. Caesar concludes the episode by stating that the Pompeians, in their confidence, had not thought of any strategy; they failed to take into an account that no decisive battle had been fought, that Caesar's people died because of the fight in a confined space, on a bad terrain, not because of wounds inflicted on them. Finally, almost as an overture to Pharsalus, Caesar reminds the Pompeians (and us) that small reversals in war may bring big changes (3.72).<sup>85</sup>

Caesar decides to keep moving his troops in the vicinity of the enemy camp, in order to wait for an opportune moment for battle. Finally, Pompey moves his line further down a hill, thus situating himself on a more favourable ground for engagement. Characteristically concise and clear, Caesar leaves the convoluted talk to the Pompeians and, in the *oratio recta* discussed above, announces that this is the chance they have been waiting for (3.85). As the Pompeians prepare for battle, Labienus urges everyone to swear that they will not return unless they are victorious (3.87). The very fact that this episode is included in Caesar's narrative adds a tragic irony to the Pompeians' hope for victory.

Caesar explores the notions of *hybris*, pity and fear, and utilizes the flexible notion of theatricality, experimenting with already existing conventions of drama and history. As a result, he constructs his character as a hero with an epic, larger-than-life perspective situated in a dramatic context with heightened performativity. This epic-dramatic Caesar opposes and punishes *hybris*, brings reversal at Alesia and Pharsalus, saves Cicero, dooms Curio by his absence, and successfully sets his reasonable and humane 'dramatic' self in contrast to the irrationality of the enemy. Caesar's project is

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<sup>85</sup> Rowe (1967:399) notes that *sententiae* and the attempts to discover universal truths behind the individual instances are characteristic of the *Civil War* and almost non-existent in the *Gallic War*.

indicative of the successful fusion of epic and drama and its complexity is reflected in the relationship with the audience. But before I turn to this subject in the last section of the chapter, I would like to pay attention to certain episodes, which remain seemingly neglected by Caesar.

### **The missed dramatic opportunities**

This section considers Caesar's skill of manipulating the means of tragic history to suit his own agenda, particularly in the narrative of the *Civil War*. The chosen instances demonstrate the flexibility of Caesar the author who deliberately omits episodes, despite their value for enhancing the dramatic structure. Nevertheless, these 'opportunities' have been detected and employed by Caesar's continuators, ancient historians, and biographers.<sup>86</sup> Assessing these scenes can shed light on the creative process behind the *Commentaries* and is important for placing Caesar's works within the wider context of historical and dramatic tradition.

The crossing of the Rubicon is a major dramatic event of the Civil War made famous by ancient historians. After pondering on the consequences of his actions, Caesar allegedly quotes a line from a play by Menander: 'let the die be cast'.<sup>87</sup> The very fact that

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<sup>86</sup> The term 'continuators' commonly refers to 'those men in Caesar's army who took it upon themselves to complete Caesar's campaign narratives of the Gallic and Civil Wars, thereby bequeathing posterity unique contemporary accounts of the transitional years of 51–50 BC, as well as of the Alexandrian, African, and Spanish Wars of 48–45 BC' (Cluett 2009:192).

<sup>87</sup> This fateful line appears in all major accounts of the event; Suetonius, the author of 'the die is cast' line, is likely to have mistranslated the original Greek sentence 'let the die be cast', the latter being more indeterminate of the result (Will 2008:79); Caesar vocalizes his thoughts of the consequences of crossing the Rubicon in Appian (2.35); Suetonius (31–32) depicts a theatrical apparition which resolves Caesar's hesitancy by taking a trumpet and sounding the call to arms (note that unless stated otherwise, all references are to Suetonius' *The Divine Julius*). Wiseman (1998:61–2) suggests dramatic foundations of this episode through the influence of Assinius Pollio, one of Caesar's associates and a source of the event,

Caesar quotes a *play* pinpoints the underlying theatricality of Caesar's world – even if this was a case of historical invention, it demonstrates the readiness with which historians allowed a connection between Caesar and drama. By ignoring this seemingly appropriate dramatic highlight, Caesar reveals his strategy – in order to highlight the defensive character of the war, he focuses on the initial attack of the Pompeians and the Senate instead of risking to appear as an aggressor who had violated the law by leaving his subordinate province before the arrival of his substitute and bringing his armed forces in Italy.

At Dyrrachium, Caesar constructs a blockade around the camp of Pompey and the latter reacts by constructing a corresponding inner line of defence. This provokes numerous skirmishes, but one, featuring the heroic exploits of the Caesarean centurion Scaeva, is particularly remarkable. However, the scene is reconstructed as a spectacular *aristeia* not by Caesar, but by Lucan a century later. Another 'missing scene', it receives only a brief treatment by Caesar – he states that Scaeva's valiant service saved the fort (3.53).<sup>88</sup> The grateful general rewards and promotes his faithful soldier but does not offer a description of the battle which brought the centurion's glory. However, in a cunningly straightforward way, by stating the great damage on Scaeva's shield (it had 120 holes in it), he evokes an impression of the ferocity of the battle – a typical Caesarean example of conciseness creating an emotional impact on the audience.

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who was also a tragedian. Raaflaub (2009:186) discusses the chronology of events and the implications of the fact that Caesar does not mention the crossing of the border.

<sup>88</sup> Townend (1987:333-4) offers a commentary on the transformations of the Scaeva story: the centurion appears in most accounts of the war, 'progressing' from Caesar's rather brief description to an account in which he loses an eye and suffers numerous wounds (Suetonius, 68); in Plutarch (16), the holes in his shield increase from 120 to 130 and he pretends to surrender in order to trick the enemy and attack them when they approach him. Scaeva's *aristeia* in Lucan: *Civil War* 6.141-262.



Interestingly, Caesar offers very sketchy descriptions of the deaths of Curio and Pompey. The reason for the decision to ignore powerful dramatic moments is exemplary of Caesar's tactic to avoid highlighting the obvious negative aspects of war. The main aim of the *Civil War* is to establish Caesar's righteousness and clemency and therefore the death count is not to be emphasized. Despite the conspicuous failure of Curio, Caesar is careful to grant his general a fraction of tragic immortality with details of his heroic death left to the audience's imagination. The death of Pompey also lacks dramatization, especially when considered in comparison to later historians' much more vivid accounts. Once again, Caesar shifts the dramatic emphasis – the flight of Pompey becomes more spectacular than his death, thus depriving him of the possible martyrdom.<sup>89</sup> In a strategy similar to the omission of the Rubicon scene, Caesar plays down the physical act of transgression (in this case the murder of the general), while highlighting the Pompeians' enmity and inferiority.

The victory in Thessaly was decisive for the image of Caesar, but not for the overall defeat of the Pompeians. After Curio's defeat, Africa became a Pompeian territory and it took Caesar another two years to make it Caesarean. The Alexandrian, African and Spanish campaigns were of no lesser importance for the outcome of the war and so the lack of written accounts of these events produced by Caesar appears problematic.<sup>90</sup> Nevertheless, it may be argued that for Caesar, after Pharsalus and Pompey's death, there was no political motivation to continue writing. Moreover, there

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<sup>89</sup> Appian offers an example of dramatic description of Pompey's death with psychological remarks and description of Pompey's suspicions (2.85). In Plutarch, Pompey's wife Cornelia witnesses the murder and there is emphasis on the general's last moments, in which he silently endures his wounds (*Pompey* 79).

<sup>90</sup> There are debates on whether the last sentence of book 3 ('These events were the beginning of the Alexandrian war') was written by Caesar or is a later addition; if we favour the first possibility, we face a decision by Caesar not to continue the history (see Adcock (1956)); Batstone & Damon (2006:30) note that without the last sentence the narrative does not end – it stops.

may also be a literary logic behind such decision, which should be seen in the light of the end of book 7 of the *Gallic War* with the culmination of Alesia. It seems likely that Caesar wanted to end his work at the high point of his victory; the fact that the process of ‘pacifying’ Gaul was far from over, would not suit the Caesarean agenda of epic conquest. The battle at Pharsalus and the death of Pompey are similar high points, suitable to end a self-glorifying narrative.<sup>91</sup> In this respect I maintain a view of the parallel structuring of the two works, although it is a matter of speculation whether it is intentional, or the outcome of Caesar’s literary intuition.

### **Epic-dramatic Caesar beyond the narrative – the author and his audience**

So far, I have analysed the epic-dramatic aspects of the *Commentaries* in relation to Caesarean self-characterization within the narrative. Epic Caesar is identified by an ‘epic progression’ initiated by exceptional celerity, which leads to a transcendence of temporal limitations and the establishment of a quasi-divine perspective. Dramatic Caesar is defined by the notion of performativity and, in his speeches, as well as scenes of *hybris* and *peripeteia*, he portrays himself as restrained and benevolent in contrast to the enemy’s excessive emotion. I have already discussed the process of transition, in which the epic objectivity of the character becomes the dramatic irony of the author. The dramatic aspect of the *Commentaries*, in particular the *Civil War*, reveal another important merger, namely that between Caesarean characters and contemporary audience,

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<sup>91</sup> Boatwright (1988) implies that the three books of the *Civil War* should be seen as one complete narrative, with book 3 bringing to a closure the heroic exploits of Caesar.

which is fundamental for the understanding of the concept of the written work as instrumental for the creation of successful theatricalized personal propaganda. Thus, the final section of this chapter considers the implications of the epic-dramatic aspects on a meta-level, exemplified by a complex process in which Caesar's epic relationship with time extends to become a control over history and the dramatic connotations of his works facilitate the creation of a virtual reality, which seeks actualization through Caesar's presence and actions. At the heart of this process of transition from intra-narrative to extra-narrative lies the unique fusion of author and protagonist and Caesar's relationship with his audience.

### **Composition and distribution**

In the light of the notion of Caesar's project to create a new historical temporality for his audience, my thesis supports arguments in favour of the *seriatim* writing and distribution of the seven books of the *Gallic War*.<sup>92</sup> Caesar initiated a powerful, yet gradual invasion of the minds of his audience allowing them to take part in an exploration, year after year, of a reality of mythical dimensions, inhabited by wondrous peoples and fierce warriors. The strategy for engaging the audience to follow the narrative in the long run, with each episode leading to the next, is revealed in Book 6 of the *Gallic War*. Following the description of the mythical forests (noted above), there is an 'interlude' describing the customs and habits of the Gauls and Germans. Even though

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<sup>92</sup> Adcock (1956:81) rightly points out it is logical for Caesar to complete each book after each campaign, while the memory of it was still fresh; also, there was always the danger that he may die in battle; Wiseman (1998(a)) accepts the various inconsistencies in the books as a proof of the fact that Caesar did not write the books together (see above, n. 84). Kraus (2009:160) believes that the narrative was completed as a unitary narrative, despite possible *seriatim* writing.

Caesar begins his (hi)story with the famous line ‘Gaul comprises of three areas...’(1.1), the bulk of information on the ways of life of the various tribes is left for Book 6.<sup>93</sup> By placing this description in his penultimate book, the author implies that this knowledge was gained after few years of exploration of those peoples, adding intellectual weight to his campaigns. In addition, the inclusion of scientific elements, especially geographical information (incidentally, a notable feature of epic poetry), adds to the credibility of the narrative and deems it more engaging.

At the end of his proconsulship in Gaul, the already established heroic image of Caesar contributed to the success of both the narrative and reality of the Civil War. The *Civil War* does not follow the linear, annual progression of the *Gallic War*: its date of composition remains questionable, the narrative stretches into many directions and the events and characters are entangled in a propagandist web of truthfulness and interpretation; it has a distinctive episodic structure and its chronology remains vague. Nevertheless, the *Civil War* does not compromise its dramaturgical logic, including a number of speeches and sharper characterization of the enemy, instrumental for Caesar’s political rehabilitation. Although the *Civil War* may have followed the same logic of the *Gallic War* in regards to distribution and composition, these issues should be re-considered in the light of the different structure and purpose of the narrative. The Civil War marks the beginning of Julius Caesar’s conquest of Rome and its literary counterpart – the *Civil War* – stands out as a work in which he completes the project of transcending the boundaries between history, reality and theatricality; therefore, the possibility of a pattern similar to the *Gallic War*, in which Caesar distributed each book as it was written

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<sup>93</sup> Adcock (1956) and Riggsby (2006) doubt the validity of early assumptions that the ‘insertions’ were late antiquity additions.

in order to attack his opponents on the literary, as well as the military front, remains plausible, yet a matter of speculation.<sup>94</sup>

In relation to the problem of distribution of Caesar's opus, Wiseman (1998a) has argued that the works, particularly the *Gallic War*, as was the case with history in ancient times in general, was read aloud in front of spectators.<sup>95</sup> This hypothesis is highly illuminating and encourages a new perspective on Caesar's stylistic 'trademark', namely his self-referential use of the third person. This approach distinguishes Caesar on two complex overlapping plains, namely those of author/narrator and character. Caesar's decision to use the third person can be interpreted in the light of assessing his *Commentaries* as a performative narrative which nevertheless retains its literary function of emphasizing the sense of objectivity.<sup>96</sup> An epic or dramatic work in which the main character blends with the poet/narrator would be of a problematic nature: the presence of the figure of the narrator/poet is crucial, but does not include identification with the hero; dramatic structure does not employ a direct presence of the author either.<sup>97</sup> However, if it

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<sup>94</sup> Various hypotheses regarding the dates of composition and distribution of the work are discussed by Raafaub (2009: 180-182). The *Civil War* was not known by Cicero in 46 BC, which implies later distribution, but it remains unclear whether it was initiated by Caesar. Adcock (1956:91-2) doubts that books 1-2 were published in 48 BC because it is likely that Caesar expected the conflict to end sooner rather than later. However, Adcock agrees that the works were most likely published before Caesar won the war, because the narrative was clearly needed to justify his actions. In her introduction to Caesar's *Civil War*, Gardner (1976) expresses doubts whether the works were published during Caesar's lifetime at all; Boatwright (1988) takes a similar stance. On the idea of Caesar's literary offensive as counterpart to military action, see Will (2008); for Caesar waging war of words see Henderson (1996).

<sup>95</sup> Wiseman (1998 (a)).

<sup>96</sup> Caesar's strategy 'is not only a convention of objectiveness, but includes, as it were, the natural, almost automatic, expression of his conscious preeminence' (Adcock 1956:76); DeWitt (1942) suggests complete lack of political engagement of Caesar's works; Riggsby (2006:209-10) also objects to the narrow dismissal of the work as propaganda and notes the tendency in modern scholarship to drift away from the idea.

<sup>97</sup> The narrator employs different ways to show his direct engagement with the narrative, including a few instances of the first person singular; the use of first person plural is also interesting with its direct relation to battle action; Batstone & Damon (2006) observe that in book 1 Caesar uses 'we' only once, in book 2 – twice; in book 3 he refers to his own narrative fourteen times, to himself as a writer – once, and to his conclusions – twice; on the figure of the narrator and his relationship with the character Caesar, see Riggsby (2006:149-155).

is assumed that the works have indeed been written to be performed or, to put it less ostentatiously, read, before an audience, then the third person emerges as a suitable form of expression. Moreover, as a somewhat ‘detachable’ mediator between author and hero, the narrator emerges as the only one who, in reading, can be *not* Caesar, as it were. The figure that could achieve a higher degree of detachment from ‘Caesar’ could in effect become the one to present the work without causing confusion by having to *act* Caesar. Although the *Commentaries* should not be evaluated on a par with dramatic or epic works with clear-cut generic identity, the theory of their performative distribution reveals a possible justification of the logic behind the literary construction.<sup>98</sup>

Clearly, the crisis the Republic was experiencing at the time of the civil conflict would not readily allow for the performative distribution that may be envisaged for the *Gallic War* in peace-time Rome. However, one remarkable example of Caesar’s ability to detach himself from his character is found in book 2 of the *Civil War*. While in Spain, Caesar learns that he had been nominated to become a dictator (2.21); later, while he spends eleven days in Rome conducting civil business (he deals with the pre-war values of property, relieves debtors, and holds the Latin holidays), Caesar is duly elected consul. The narrative emphasizes the fact that Caesar, unlike Pompey, becomes consul exactly ten years since he last held the post, according to the law.<sup>99</sup> However, the rightfulness of the elections is somewhat clouded by the fact that it is Caesar himself who holds them as a dictator; nevertheless, the author matter-of-factly announces that the consuls elected

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<sup>98</sup> Wiseman’s theory and its connection with Caesar’s use of third person is accepted by Clark (2007:244); given the complexity of Caesar’s project, DeWitt’s claim that the use of third person is a deliberate avoidance of drama seems rather superficial (1942:348). An interesting experiment is offered by Peter and Anne Wiseman in their edition of the *Gallic War (The Battle for Gaul (1980))* substituting Caesar’s third person with first singular.

<sup>99</sup> Pompey had been consul with Crassus in 55 BC and again in 52 BC – a more controversial appointment *sine collega*; thus Pompey had violated the law, established by Sulla, for a required time lapse of ten years between consulships.

were Publius Servilius and Julius Caesar (3.1). The newly elected consul ‘Julius Caesar’ emerges as a momentary extra emanation to accompany the author/narrator-protagonist pair. Such ‘multiplication’ of Caesars is an example of the intentional detachment of the character from the author, supported by the use of the third person. It is also a reminder of Caesar’s skills as propagandist: when he abdicates from the dictatorship (3.2), Caesar subtly deceives his audience into thinking that he is resigning power, whereas in fact he has already secured his *imperium* as a consul.

### **History is now/*Clementia* – living in the new Caesarean time**

Not unlike ancient plays, presented to an audience not expecting new content, but to experience novel adaptation of familiar material, Caesar’s *Gallic War* was presented after a number of Romans already knew the outcome of the given year in Gaul.<sup>100</sup> However, it is doubtful that Caesar’s dispatches to the Senate and those of other individuals likely to have been circulated in Rome, deprived the narratives of their audience. People were presented with the much more detailed and authoritative version, a version which due to Caesar’s literary and political influence would remain in posterity as the only historical source of these campaigns. Moreover, there was an important sense of immediacy – the history came *shortly* after the actual events, unlike other historical material dealing with events of the more remote past.<sup>101</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> Torigian (1998:50): ‘Caesar’s presentation of events could easily have taken on a similar air of inevitability’.

<sup>101</sup> ‘In late republican Rome historical narrative was popular entertainment’ (Wiseman (1998(a): 4); a contrasting view is offered by Adcock (1956:19-25), who opposes Mommsen’s claim that the *Commentarii* are the reports of a democratic general to the people; although noting that ancient narrative was composed to be read aloud, Adcock denies general distribution on the basis of the slow circulation of books and their

Caesar's *Gallic War* demonstrates the author's sensitivity to the shared subject matter of epic, drama and history. The work introduces the new Caesarean reality, developed throughout the course of Caesar's unprecedented nine years of proconsular government of Gaul. The scale of the narrative encompasses a long period and features many characters and events set against the backdrop of the archetypal enmity between Romans and barbarians with valour and *virtus* opposing rashness and moral inferiority. The themes of the narrative – war and conquest, situated on a vast geographic scale – create an overall epic atmosphere. The temporal scale is also extraordinary – the narrative encompasses seven years of military campaigns; the conflict with Vercingetorix extends for the whole length of book 7 and describes wide territory of military action and multitudes of Gallic soldiers. With the *Gallic War*, Caesar initiates a process of distortion of the temporal boundaries between history and the present and gradually involves the audience in a virtual, historical reality, created solely by his authoritative account. It offers a parallel dimension to the 'reality' in Rome – a history, happening 'now'.

The *Civil War* challenges the temporal boundaries between history and the present even further. Caesar's physical presence is decisive for the blurring of the borderline between narrative and reality; unlike the Gallic conquest, the theatricality of the *Civil War* is *embodied* by Caesar's persona. His narrative operates in accord with the military operations in order to secure the position of supremacy, the *Civil War* coming as a literary 'aftershock' to the crossing of the Rubicon. By eliminating the necessary temporal gap between the happening of a given event and its historical account, Caesar constructs a history that effectively installs a new ideological layer within people's

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restriction to the upper classes. Riggsby (2006) is also sceptical about the popular audience, suggested by Wiseman.



reality. An indication of the narrative transcending its virtual nature and acquiring actuality already exists in the *Gallic War*: unprecedented number of thanksgiving days is voted by the Senate to celebrate Caesarean victories. The *Civil War* marks a progression towards the next phase of the project – the complete blending of the Caesarean and Roman reality. The demarcation line between history and life becomes weaker as the characters are in fact people familiar to the Romans and the lands where the action takes place lack the mythical aura of Gaul and Britain. Thus, the *Civil War* presents an important oxymoron, namely that the audience simultaneously acts as characters in the narrative.

The modification of historical personalities into Caesarean historical characters is an essential process for the narrative of the *Civil War* which could not have been sustained with such *panache* in the *Gallic War*. Although some characters, for instance Quintus Cicero, were more or less known in Rome, Caesar's arch enemy Vercingetorix is doomed to remain a product of the general's extreme subjectivity. However, in the fusion of *Gallic War* and *Civil War*, the notion of 'outside' of the narrative becomes inadequate. The transformation of Caesar, who fictionalized himself but necessarily retained his public identity, is shared by his characters. Since information about the events of the civil conflict was more widely available to the Romans, it was vital for Caesar to establish his version of the conflict as the authoritative one. Whilst in Gaul, he had created a virtual reality for the Roman audience and involved them in it through his history. The brilliance of the *Civil War* lies in the more direct invasion of the Roman timeframe.

By the time it was written and distributed (whether during Caesar's lifetime or not remains subject of debate), the audience had already been exposed to the events of the

war or had even taken part in them; naturally, these people could have reacted in different ways to questions of validity and the emotional impact of Caesar's history. However, since everyone was more or less affected by the conflict, it may be assumed that the scale of Caesar's actions effectively altered every Roman's reality. Moreover, the *Civil War* established the already existing Caesarean parallel dimension, initiated by the *Gallic War*, as the new actuality; the virtual reality, fostered by the performativity of the *Commentaries* engaged the contemporary social milieu in the alternative temporality of Caesar's dramatized career. With the virtual reality becoming actuality, the necessity to express the new Caesarean temporality arises. An implication of the temporal dimensions of Caesarean reality can be found in Caesar's famous *clementia*, considered as an ability to bestow a new lifetime on people.

While the author of the *Commentaries* wages war, the protagonist creates the impression that he avoids unnecessary violence and seeks peace negotiations, a clear indication of Caesar's desire to project an image of dignified benevolence.<sup>102</sup> Caesar's *clementia* emerges as the sublime effect of propaganda, facilitating the establishment of the new Caesarean reality. However, although friendly Gauls may receive benevolent treatment, the seeds of Caesarean *clementia* could only be planted on native soil – in the *Civil War*.

At the non-violent capture of Corfinium, emphasizing the *defensive* character of his *invasion*, Caesar bestows the money from the treasury to the Pompeian Domitius, demonstrating his reluctance to claim neither lives nor money from the town. At the end of the episode, the author notes the length of the operation – it took only seven days to

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<sup>102</sup> Henderson's comparison of Caesarean vs. 'Pompeian' vocabulary illustrates the point: Caesarean 'withdrawal' vs. Pompeian 'flight', 'set-back' against 'disaster', 'elimination' vs. 'massacre' (Henderson 1996: 265); Caesar himself does not use the word *clementia*, but *lenitas* instead (Raaflaub 2009:190).

take Corfinium (1.23). In this case Caesarean speed is used to conclude an undesired conflict as soon as possible. The Spanish campaign involves many skirmishes and out-manoeuving with no decisive pitched battle, but nevertheless a strategic victory for Caesar; it also offers a good example of the author's psychological propaganda of mercy. One key scene is the already noted fraternization of the Pompeian and Caesarean troops, resulting in the Pompeian massacre of Caesareans set in contrast to Caesar's welcoming mercy. Another episode featuring the Pompeian generals in Spain also reveals Caesar's benevolent nature. While fortifying his camp, although reluctant to engage in a battle, Caesar is challenged by the Pompeians. He prepares his troops for skirmish, but no action follows. Caesar points out that each side has achieved its aim – the Pompeians succeeded in putting a halt to the construction of Caesarean fortifications, whereas Caesar avoided massacre (1.83). Seeking to prevent the imminent bloodshed of both his men and the Pompeians, Caesar assesses the situation from a perspective, unattainable for his enemies.

The different fates of two Greek towns are worth mentioning in relation to Caesar's mercifulness. After Caesar's defeat at Dyrrachium, Pompeian propaganda convinces various towns in the area of the imminent victory of Pompey. Therefore, when Caesar arrives at Gomphi, he discovers that the ruler of the town has become 'Pompey's adherent in victory rather than Caesar's ally in adversity' (3.80) and destroys the town. Quick to learn the lesson, the neighbouring town of Metropolis welcomes Caesar and readily accepts his authority and the mercy it implies. Due to the large scale of Caesar's military action and the totality of power accumulated by him after the Civil War, his *clementia* appears on the verge of divine supremacy. However, nowhere in the narrative

does Caesar indicate that references to his benevolence may be alluding to divine prerogatives.

One of Caesar's few extant letters, preserved among Cicero's correspondence, proclaims to his associates peaceful conduct as the way of achieving victory.<sup>103</sup> The policy of *clementia* affects both the characters in the narrative and those living 'outside' in the new Caesarean reality, thus once again demonstrating the superficiality of the distinction between characters and audience and proclaiming the universality of Caesar's mercifulness. This is the benevolence of the victor, which may easily be perceived as a ruthless punishment, an enslavement of the mind and the body.<sup>104</sup> Cato's suicide remains in history as the paradigmatic example of the reaction against Caesarean clemency. However, it is likely that at Corfinium, *clementia* is a welcome salvation – by swearing allegiance to Caesar, the Pompeian soldiers, effectively granted *time* by the victor, receive their lives back and can once again be defined as members of society. This reintroduction into society marks the pinnacle of the audience-characters sublimation in Caesar's works, because the audience of the *Civil War* survives to celebrate Caesar's victories, precisely because they are the 'victims' of the politics of mercy.

This chapter has set the groundwork of the study of the reception of Julius Caesar in epic and dramatic works. The scale of Caesar's *Commentaries* is disguised by the simplicity of style, alleged objectivity and the 'camouflage' of an unpretentious genre. I endeavoured to demonstrate the importance of recognizing the intrinsic epic and dramatic

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<sup>103</sup> Cicero *Letters to Atticus* (174C (9.7C)); the first person 'normality' of the epistolary text clearly exposes the strategic use of the third person in his works.

<sup>104</sup> The possibility that mercifulness was only a result of policy is claimed by Curio (Cicero *Letters to Atticus* (195 (10.4))). Yavetz (1983:213) argues that Caesar lacked tact, especially when he thought he was in the right. Powell (1998) discusses and compares Caesar's manifestation of mercifulness in Gaul and during the Civil War.

aspects of Caesar's self-representation in his *Commentaries* operating both within the narrative and as part of Caesarean personal propaganda. As both author and character, Caesar transcends his narrative and establishes a new theatricalized temporal reality for Rome. The ability to exist in a fusion of epic and dramatic qualities within a historical (and autobiographical) framework is identified as the main prerequisite for Caesar's enigmatic and powerful image in subsequent historical, epic and dramatic works. In order to argue the validity of this claim, I proceed to a case study analysis in which the character Caesar is considered in terms of his intrinsic qualities laid out in the *Commentaries* – epic progression, transcendence of temporal boundaries and the notions of performativity and meta-theatricality.

## Chapter 2: Lucan versus Caesar: Fighting for Time in the Epic *Civil War*

The present chapter offers an analysis of Lucan's epic poem *Civil War*, which identifies Caesar as the protagonist of the narrative, possessing quasi-divine/demonic omnipresence and influence, and fulfilling his aspirations to control temporality. Caesar's power lies in his ability to submit both enemies and allies to his own timeframe; in effect, he establishes a theatrical/performative suspension of time and masters historical reality. Lucan's modification of essential elements of Caesar's self-representation exposes the poet's ambiguous attitude towards his protagonist, consisting of a paradoxical fusion of admiration and resentment. I argue that the qualities Caesar attributes to himself in his *Commentaries* on the Civil War are sustained in Lucan's depiction, albeit with negative value and intending to undermine the validity of Caesar's achievement. Moreover, Caesar is opposed by the epic poet himself, who demands his right to pass judgement on the Civil War and negates Caesar's claim to historical absolutism.

The chapter begins with a brief consideration of two issues in Lucanian scholarship, namely identifying the protagonist and the intended ending of the work. This is followed by analysis of Caesar's control of temporality in the poem, consisting of the epic progression, familiar from the *Commentaries*, speed – omnipresence – control of time, a progression which instead of elevating the hero towards divine totality of perspective, creates an association with witchcraft. Notably, Lucan introduces delay, a notion virtually ignored in the *Commentaries*, as the only means of opposition to Caesarean speed. Caesar is considered against his 'internal' (to the narrative) enemies Pompey and Cato, as well as the 'external' adversary – Lucan.

The second part of the study investigates the results of Caesarean control of time, considered as two strands: firstly, the establishment of a theatrical suspension of time, as it were, revealed in terms of the performativity of war, the gaze of the commander, as well as the visual impact of violence and death; the second strand takes the discussion to a transcendental level and assesses Lucan's fierce reaction to Caesarean control over historical time, emerging as the *raison d'être* of the poem.

## Lucan and his epic

Marcus Annaeus Lucanus (AD 39-65), the nephew of Seneca the Younger, took an active part in the social and political life in Neronian Rome. By the time he was writing the historical epic *Civil War*, Lucan was on friendly terms with the emperor, who had appointed him to the posts of augur and quaestor; moreover, Lucan was awarded the prize for poetry in the first *Neronia* in AD 60. When, possibly due to artistic jealousy, Nero banned the performance of Lucan's works, Lucan took part in the famous Pisonian conspiracy against the emperor. Upon the discovery of the plot, the young poet was forced to commit suicide, a fate which his uncle also met in the same year.<sup>105</sup>

Although Lucan authored numerous works – poems, satires, and librettos for pantomimes – these are lost, and consequently his artistic legacy consists exclusively of the ten books of the *Civil War*. The poem begins with the eloquent, but (rather problematic for modern scholarship) sycophantic proem to the divine Nero; the account of the civil conflict includes the crossing of the Rubicon, the Spanish campaign, the siege

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<sup>105</sup> On the positions held by Lucan, see Suetonius (*Lucan. Lives of Illustrious Men*); Lucan's involvement in the Pisonian conspiracy is mentioned by Tacitus (*Annals* 15.49) and Suetonius (*Lucan. Lives of Illustrious Men*); On Lucan winning the *Neronia*, see Beacham (1999: 233).

of Massillia, Caesar's victory at Pharsalus, and Pompey's death in Egypt. Book 10 ends unfinished, Lucan leaving Caesar at the beginning of the Alexandrian War, fighting against numerous Egyptian troops, his future yet undecided.<sup>106</sup>

The *Civil War* features catalogues of troops, storms, and large scale battle action; and yet, the apparent absence of a distinct epic hero and divine characters seemingly mark a deviation from the traditional epic structure. Consequently, there is a tendency to attribute specific heroic qualities to each of the three main characters – Caesar, Cato and Pompey.<sup>107</sup> In my view, accepting the importance of the major characters does not negate the predominance of the character of Caesar; nevertheless, he remains a non-conventional epic hero: he is rejected by some, whereas others rightly claim it was Lucan's hero that probably saved his work from oblivion.<sup>108</sup> Caesar has also been called a 'dynamic protagonist who can only be described adequately as an anti-hero'.<sup>109</sup> Although the poetic and audience's attention is distributed between Caesar and Pompey, this apparent traditional epic impartiality of the author is to a great extent elusive: Lucan's overall attitude towards war is critical and he engages in a complex love-hate relationship both

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<sup>106</sup> Lucanian works are mentioned in the accounts of Suetonius, Statius and Vacca (overview by Duff 1960: 240). The proem dedicated to Nero is considered a parody of Virgil's address to Augustus in the *Georgics* (Johnson 1987:121-2) or, indeed, a sincere laudation of the emperor (Thompson and Bruere 1968:4-5).

<sup>107</sup> Hadas (1936: 156): Pompey is the emotional hero, Cato – the moral, and Caesar – the hero in an *epic sense* (italics mine); Duff (1960: 263): Pompey is the formal hero, Cato – the spiritual, and Caesar – the practical. According to MacKay (1975:147), Lucan wrote the *Passion of St. Pompey*, [...] in which the new 'shoot of medieval martyrology' is evident. My treatment of the poem does not accept such uncritical worship on Lucan's part. There is also an alternative approach, namely to seek a more abstract 'hero', such as the senate, the republic, or indeed, liberty – for an overview, see Holliday (1969:14).

<sup>108</sup> 'In the light of Lucan's theme, Caesar, the aggressor, seems the least likely candidate' (Holliday 1969: 14); 'Lucan's fame persists because he made Caesar his principal character...' (Walde 2006: 47). Caesar 'resembles the traditional heroic warrior who possesses great military prowess and some superhuman qualities...' Braund (2008) in her introduction to Lucan (2008: xxi). Lucan's Caesar is '...the emotional and narrative focus of the poem, an attractive, if fearful, mixture of defiance and ruthlessness, epic grandeur and impious heroism' (Schiesaro 2003: 124); Caesar is the true muse of Lucan (Johnson 1987: 118). Feeney (1993: 292-8) also implies the predominance of Caesar's character in the poem.

<sup>109</sup> Braund (2008) in introduction to Lucan (2008: xliv). This notion of the anti-hero finds a response in the more positive claim that 'Lucan's Caesar is seen to rewrite the rules regarding what being an epic hero means' (Matthews 2008: 20).



with Pompey, whom he admires but criticizes, and with Caesar, to whom he grants loftiness of action and destructive energy, but only to condemn the civil conflict initiated by the general. However, since Caesar is not only the initiator of the war, but also the victor whose legacy conditions Rome in Lucan's lifetime, the poet demonstrates stronger emotional involvement in the depiction of Caesar and this supports my intuitive sense that Caesar is the 'true' protagonist.

Assuming that the work has been left unfinished, various theories of its intended length have been suggested.<sup>110</sup> Although discussing these is beyond the scope of this chapter, it should be noted that I sympathize with views that the poem ends precisely at the point at which Lucan intended. Therefore, the premise that Lucan's work stands as a generic and stylistic antipode to Caesar's *Commentary* on the Civil War is supported in this chapter by demonstrating how the features in the self-characterization of Caesar find response in the poem. As a result, the two works are correlated in terms of their epic and performative representation of the character Caesar.<sup>111</sup>

## Epic Caesar's speed

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<sup>110</sup> Vacca's claim that three books were published during Lucan's lifetime follows traditional biographies of poets and many elements may be invented to fit the model lives of Virgil (reciting three books of the *Aeneid*) and Ovid (incurring the anger of the emperor) (Masters 1992: 220-1); nowhere Vacca mentions that Lucan left his poem unfinished; he says the poem did not receive its final revision (Masters 1992: 222); Duff offers an overview of the opinions regarding the intended end of the poem – ranging from Thapsus to Actium (1960: 253); on the scope of Lucan's epic, see Bruere (1950).

<sup>111</sup> Caesar's *Commentaries* should be accepted as source for Lucan's poem alongside the accounts of Livy and Assinius Pollio (see Duff 1960: 225), also Holliday (1969), whose study considers Lucan's use of Cicero's correspondence). Claims that Lucan's work is deliberate counterpoise to Caesar's *Commentaries* are supported by Masters (1992: 17-8) and Feeney (1993: 274); the poem was designed to have no end: 'for a poem whose premise is the impossibility of its resolution, the only possible ending is one which cuts us off at that moment where nothing is resolved' (Masters 1992: 253); 'the narrative is studded with the emotional refusal of an ending' (Leigh 1997: 21).

The historical Julius Caesar crosses the Rubicon provoked by complex personal and political reasons. His *Commentaries* accentuate the Senate's decision to deprive Caesar of his proconsulship and the maltreatment of the tribunes – Mark Antony and Quintus Cassius – who, unable to defend Caesar's interests any longer, are forced to leave Rome and seek refuge with him. Caesar's personal indignation is modified into a matter of importance for the whole Roman state, and thus in effect serves as a justification for the war. Lucan is unwilling to accept the propagandistic message of the *Commentaries* and negates the rationality behind Caesar's actions. Instead, the poet exposes the irrationality of *furor*, an emotion of epic dimensions, as the source of the energy of Caesar; triggered by anger, the war is infused with the subjective experiences of one man, whose indignation and ambition prompt an *aristeia* against the whole world.<sup>112</sup>

In the *Commentaries*, Caesar establishes himself as the personification of reason and defines irrationality as a distinctive Pompeian/Enemy quality, related to barbarian behaviour. Lucan accuses Caesar of precisely the same excessive emotion, which the latter ascribes to his enemies. Lucan's Caesar is a personification of war and starts the conflict because to conquer the world is the only means and end of his existence.<sup>113</sup> It is important, however, that notwithstanding his criticism towards Caesar, Lucan does not deny the faults of the Pompeians and accuses both sides in yielding to irrationality. Nevertheless, with *furor* being the stimulus to Caesar's actions, this negative emotion is placed at the core of Caesarean speed and omnipresence, qualities considered assets in

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<sup>112</sup> According to Seneca, anger is provoked by feeling of indignation (*De Ira* 2.1.4-2.3); Caesar clearly has submitted to anger in Senecan terms.

<sup>113</sup> Barbarians are said to lose their battles against the Romans, precisely because they cannot control their anger (Seneca *De Ira*, 1.10.4); on the cosmic dimension of Caesar's *furor*, see Lapidge (1979: 368).

the narrative of the *Commentaries*. With its negative overtone, Caesar's epic progression is bound to lead to destruction.

In order to become master of time, Lucan's Caesar employs his famous *celeritas* enabling him to establish his own timeframe and securing his omnipresence. One of the most striking similes in the poem presents Pompey as a venerable oak, whereas Caesar is likened to a thunderbolt (1.135), an attribute which the audience can recognize as specific to none but Jupiter himself.<sup>114</sup> It is the destructiveness, but also the swiftness of the attack that brings the ultimate damage to the oak. Lucan's message is clear: the true domain of Caesarean power lies in speed, impatience, and superhuman energy. Moreover, it is important that these abilities suggest a life outside regular timeframes.

Initiating all action, Caesar determines the tempo of the narrative. His characteristic weapon of choice is surprise, introduced by the crossing of the Rubicon with single legion in the midst of winter. In order to heighten the dramatic tension in the Rubicon scene, Lucan evokes a vision of Rome (1.180-220), appearing at the river boundary between Rome and Cisalpine Gaul. The apparition, in the guise of a mother-like figure, asks the general to stop; compared to a lion, Caesar rushes onwards. By presenting the vision of a city as human and the great man – as a beast – Lucan implicitly suggests a communication void between the two, but also reinforces the sense of impetus of Caesar.<sup>115</sup> Although the Rubicon scene is characteristically missing from Caesar's *Commentaries*, it is given prominence by ancient historians, thus allowing for the

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<sup>114</sup> Anger is always accompanied by rashness (Seneca, *De Ira*, 1.17.5) – in Caesar's case, it can be related to speed. Interestingly, Lucan also compares Alexander to a thunderbolt (10.34); on the comparison between Alexander and Caesar as Fortune's favourites, see Dick (1967: 237-8).

<sup>115</sup> According to Schiesaro (2003: 124), this lion has almost a 'heroic defiance in the face of the enemy'; Masters considers the lion simile as premonition of death (1992: 2, n.5)

possibility of epic influence over historical depiction. The issue of Lucan as historical source of the events of the Civil War is addressed in the second part of the chapter.

Once the war is unleashed, Caesar is in his element and the wrathful energy, accumulating from the beginning of the narrative, bursts out. He is ‘swifter than the whirled thong on Belearic sling | or the Parthian’s arrow shot over his shoulder...’ (1.227-30).<sup>116</sup> Further encouraged by Curio, who claims that Caesar should rule the world alone (1.273-291), the general is once again compared to an animal: ‘as much as the Elean race-horse | is aroused by the shouting, and though enclosed in starting-gate | he already reaches for the door and pressing forward loosens the bars’ (1.293-5). Caesar is presented as a perfectionist, who would betray his nature if he is content with less than the totality of power: pursuing Pompey, he ‘fiercely presses on, impetuous in everything and thinking nothing done when there | remains still something more to do’ (2.656-8).

Following the events at Brundisium, where Caesar’s endeavours to blockade the harbour do not prevent Pompey from escaping, Caesar sees Rome for the first time after his ten-year governorship in Gaul. The episode is rather brief, Lucan focusing mainly on the emptying of the treasury (3.168); characteristically, this passage finds different treatment in Caesar’s *Commentaries*, emphasizing efficiency instead.<sup>117</sup> Finally, leaving Rome and heading towards Gaul and Spain, Lucan’s general, ‘hurrying his troops, races over cloud-capped Alps’ (3. 298-9). In Spain, Caesar demonstrates his speed by reaching a mountain pass first, even though his enemies seem to arrive before him.<sup>118</sup>

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<sup>116</sup> All quotations are from Lucan. 2008. *Civil War*. Translated by S. Braund (Oxford World’s Classics).

<sup>117</sup> When a tribune attempts to disrupt his work, ‘Caesar found out this plot, after several days had been wasted, and to save spending any more time he gave up the rest of his projected business and left Rome for Further Gaul’ (*Civil War* 1.33).

<sup>118</sup> ‘Caesar overtakes the Pompeians so quickly that he reaches the mountains first even though they seem to have already arrived; “hoste potito” is replaced by “hostem tendentem” as if we had moved a step backwards in time’ (Masters 1992: 70, n.70).

The above instances serve as an ample demonstration of Caesarean speed and impatience in the narrative, qualities which emerge as definitive for the Lucanian epic hero. His impetus, however, is met by various opposing forces and circumstances, capable of instigating delay at different stages of the action.

### **Speed meets delay**

In my reading of the poem, the character of Pompey is defined by the notion of spatial superiority. As an agent of the State, he is in possession of land resources in Rome, Spain, and the East. By boasting that ‘no region of the world is without me’ (2.583), Pompey declares his spatial supremacy against Caesarean speed. Nevertheless, Lucan bitterly laments that ‘to ensure that lucky Caesar received everything at one stroke, | Pharsalia offered him the world to be conquered at once’ (3.296-7), thus foreseeing the shrinking of the world in one focal point later, on the Thessalian battlefield. In the earlier stages of the conflict, however, Pompey still has control over space and succeeds in counterbalancing his father-in-law’s control of time. Caesar is forced to disperse his attention to many locations which pose an implicit challenge to the efficiency of speed.

Caesar’s first surprising attack brings his first victory: Pompey retreats to Brundisium and then crosses over to Greece. After leaving Brundisium and thus surrendering a substantial territory to Caesar, whilst sailing across the Adriatic, Pompey has a dream. In his night vision, his wife and Caesar’s daughter, Julia, menacingly describes the underworld preparing for the War (3.8-27). More importantly, she declares that from now on, Caesar will haunt his days and Julia – his nights. There is no point

when Pompey would not have a member of the Julian clan harassing his own time. In the *Commentaries*, Caesar's use of the strategic and tactical advantages of night attacks and construction work exemplify his expediency. Lucan's epic also acknowledges that Caesar gains additional advantage by acting at night, a period of timelessness for other people. He ponders during the night before crossing the Rubicon, spends many nights in travelling, and even attempts to cross the sea in a small boat during a storm (a scene discussed below). Nevertheless, similarly to other self-proclaimed Caesarean assets, Lucan demonizes this ability and Pompey's dream is an opportunity for Lucan to ascribe a chthonic link between death and night to the whole Julian family.

As the action of the poem progresses, Pompey's space is reduced further: by subjecting Spain and entering Rome, Caesar causes a sea change in Pompey's position, who finds himself almost in the periphery of his own space. The events at Dyrrachium can be seen as another time-space clash: the blockade demonstrates Caesar's ability to effectively limit his adversary's space. Although the skirmish at Dyrrachium is won by the Pompeians, the space of a whole Pompeian army is restrained for long time by what seems to be the endless exploits of Scaeva, the Caesarean centurion whose miraculous survival after receiving numerous wounds is an example of the fanaticism of Caesarean soldiers.

When Pompey's associates accuse him of delaying the decisive battle at Pharsalus, the only opposition to Caesar fails from within. Against his will and experience, Pompey gives orders for battle, submitting to Caesar's frenzy. Although his spatial power is diminished, yet he finds strength to say: 'at a single moment all the world is ours to use' (7.362-3). The problem of Pompey's defeat is caused by the lack of unity

and true motivation in an army gathered from various parts of the empire. Most importantly, Pompey himself is demoralized by the fact that all his space is contracted into one point. After the first engagement, it becomes clear that Caesar's forces are defeating the large cavalry, on which Pompey has been relying. The oak's branches are cut one by one and Magnus leaves the battlefield in a hardly dignified, albeit profoundly human manner. The relationship between Pompey and space continues in Lucan's depiction of the general's death in Egypt and his makeshift burial by the quaestor Cordus (8.712-793); the poet bewails the shade of Magnus – it is confined to barely visible grave, while its true resting place is the whole Roman world (8.795-9). With time personified by Caesarean speed and space – by Pompey, Lucan offers a unique view of the time-space in epic and of the relationship between the two antagonists on a transcendental level.

Cato's two appearances in the poem are not sufficient to create a well-rounded character elevated above the archetypal, rather two-dimensional embodiment of the Stoic ideal. His affection for the republican ideals distinguishes Cato as a natural enemy of Caesar who opposes him on an ideological level. In a lengthy scene in book 2, Cato discusses with Brutus the situation of the imminent conflict and envisages his self-sacrificial death as guardian of republican principles as means to deprive the dynasts from cause for war (2.310-20). Thus Cato implicitly identifies himself with Rome itself, proving to be no lesser megalomaniac than Caesar. By creating a parallel between the gods and Cato, Lucan seems to encourage the reception of his character as superhuman and with a crucial importance for the Civil War: 'each has on his side a great authority: The conquering cause the gods, the conquered Cato' (1.127-8). Nevertheless, in the light of the overall atmosphere of catastrophic disintegration in the poem, it is difficult to

assess the character of Cato as a martyr of the Republic without a hint of bitter sarcasm.<sup>119</sup> And yet, it is possible to claim that Cato, striving to resist the general chaos inflicted by Caesar, may be considered as offering an effective *internal* objection to Caesar's invading timeframe. The experience of temporality is a subjective process and through his Stoic understanding of the firmness of mind, Cato resists the inclusion within the new time. However, despite his resolution to fight and his heroic crossing of the Libyan Desert in book 9, Cato's actions are not able to stop Caesar. As he wages battle against the elements and a whole catalogue of poisonous snakes, his Stoic values remain in the metaphysical realm.<sup>120</sup>

After Pompey's death, Lucan declares that Caesar's true enemy is liberty (7.696); thus, by being positioned against an important deified quality, his character acquires even more distinct superhuman dimensions.<sup>121</sup> Moreover, this conflict acquires a special meaning due to the history of the conspiracy against historical Caesar, *libertas* being hailed by the assassins. As an antagonist to liberty, Caesar acquires universal, abstract identity and dissolves into the poem's inner, ideological structure.

On the battlefield of Pharsalus, Caesar is 'sick of delay and blazing with desire for power...' (7.240). Since Lucan presents his hero as almost physically ailing when he encounters delay, it is hardly surprising that delay emerges as the only weapon against Caesarean speed. Delay is caused by enemies, natural forces and, in a number of

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<sup>119</sup> I agree with Johnson (1987:45) that Lucan is ridiculing... 'the fading dreams of an impoverished Stoicism'.

<sup>120</sup> The conflict between Caesar and Cato, seen in terms of the concept of *oikeosis* is discussed by George (1988: 341): *oikeosis* forces Cato to fight and whereas he is ready to offer his life for the country, Caesar – the Stoic fool and villain – offers his countrymen's lives for his own greatness (*Civil War* 5.319-64, 6.250-329); see also Roller (1996), who addresses the ethical system of the Late Republic in relation to *Civil War*.

<sup>121</sup> Martindale (1984: 75-76): 'this is the political equivalent of a philosophical image in Seneca's *De Providentia* (2.9), where the gods look down on another gladiatorial pair, Cato and Fortune, locked in combat'; on deified qualities see Clark (2007).



apostrophic feats, by the poet himself. This marks an important deviation from the self-representation of Caesar, whose focus on speed and efficiency denies any significance to delay.<sup>122</sup>

In the beginning of his victorious advance, following the crossing of the Rubicon, Caesar reaches the town of Corfinium, guarded by Domitius, who is resolute to make his stand. The narrator considers a delay of Caesar as a victory in itself (2.480-90). Later, when the general is on his way to attack the Pompeians in Spain, another town – Massilia – offers resistance. Again, Lucan praises Massilia because it alone makes an attempt to delay the course of events: ‘What an achievement, to | detain the Fates, | to make fortune waste these days in her haste to set | her warrior in command of the entire world’ (3.392-4).<sup>123</sup> However, Caesar, conscious of his own powers, sarcastically exclaims: ‘In vain are these Greeks inspired by confidence in my speed. | Although we are hurrying to the western region of the world, | there is time to destroy Massilia’ (3. 357-360). In effect, neither Corfinium, nor Massilia can stop Caesar – like a demonic avalanche, he becomes stronger as he advances towards what Lucan sees as an ideological cataclysm. Whilst Caesar is engaged with the Pompeian forces in Spain, his manoeuvring is checked by a flood, a substantial delay caused by a natural force. Lucan addresses Neptune with a plea to send a deluge, a disaster to put an end to war (4.110-120). However, after the rains: ‘...Fortune returns in full force, content with her warrior’s | little fright, and more than usual do the propitious gods | favour him and earn forgiveness’ (4.121-2). Caesar rushes his troops across the waters and soon succeeds in routing Pompey’s generals Petreius and

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<sup>122</sup> The subject of delay in Lucan has found an extensive treatment in the work of Masters (1992) and Henderson (1998).

<sup>123</sup> By choosing to deal with the Massilian episode as a whole, instead of following the more fragmented treatment in the *Commentaries*, Lucan challenges ‘the Caesar-centrism of Caesar’s narrative’ and imposes delay (Masters 1992: 24).

Afranius. After the victory in Spain, Caesar traverses Europe, reaches Brundisium and sooner than anyone had expected, crosses the Adriatic. Once debarked in Greece, however, the restless general is compelled to wait for Mark Antony, whose caution to transport the remaining half of the army causes another delay. Caesar demands the rest of the army to be brought: ‘I bewail the loss of hours of destiny...’ (5.490), ‘[T]he rest has been achieved by my speed, and fortune asks of you the final touch to a war sped onwards through successes’ (5.482-4). The delay of Mark Antony – Caesar’s closest associate – signals momentary internal temporal disruption, which is nevertheless overcome.

It is important that all delays encountered by Caesar throughout the narrative are propagated and admired by Lucan. His poetic vision supports all barriers aimed at interfering with Caesarean progress; he ‘loathes the progress of his story of Caesarian triumph, loves *mora*, delay, obstruction, diversion: whether physical and external, or internalized as doubt, hesitation and other forms of paralysis’.<sup>124</sup> In addition to commending and encouraging the ‘internal’ delays, part of the historical narrative, for example Corfinium and Massilia, Lucan ‘invades’ the narrative and offers his own ways to delay the progress of epic Caesar. By depicting an old man recalling the events of the previous big civil conflict – between Marius and Sulla – in book 2, he demonstrates his power to evoke the past and delay the events to come. At the scene of the battle at Pharsalus, at the point when the presence of the narrator is crucial, Lucan refuses to describe the atrocities of the war.<sup>125</sup> This poetic self-denial is an alternative way to stop

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<sup>124</sup> Henderson (1998: 183).

<sup>125</sup> This is almost as if Homer refuses to describe the duel between Hector and Achilles (Johnson 1987:98); ‘In the struggle between Caesar and Pompey, then, lies the paradigm of Lucan's narrative technique: the conflict between the will to tell the story and the horror which shies from telling it...’ (Masters 1992: 9).

the action whilst at the same time insists on the ‘demiurge’ powers of the poet, his ability to create certain events and to deny others.

The terminal destruction which Lucan associates with the Civil War seems to bring on an apocalypse to the entire world. When the narrator claims that ‘In all his prayers he [Caesar] presses for the hour fatal to the world, which stakes everything on the dice...’ (6.6-7), this fatal hour is in fact the end of time as Rome knows it; nevertheless, there is a feeling that Lucan would rather envisage the end of time on universal level than accept Caesarean temporality.<sup>126</sup> However, creating a Caesar, who ‘...races on through fields...swifter than the flames of heaven...’ (5.405), Lucan indulges in a contradiction – he sets off the rollercoaster of destruction and then attempts to delay the forthcoming events. The key to understanding this issue is to consider Lucan as an active participant in his work, almost to the point of self-fictionalization.<sup>127</sup> Not unlike Caesar’s approach in his *Commentaries*, Lucan’s authorial persona is actively and purposefully implicated in the shaping of the narrative and the introduction of delay stands out as a major intrusion of the author in the poem. It is directly related to another authorial involvement on meta-level, subject to discussion in the last section of the chapter, namely Lucan’s endeavour to oppose historical Caesar whose spirit and legacy have conditioned the poet’s reality.

Although Caesarean efficiency is challenged by various opposition forces, Caesar succeeds in overcoming these by his extraordinary speed and as a result, his presence is felt virtually everywhere in the narrative. Caesarean omnipresence is clearly revealed at

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<sup>126</sup> This vision of apocalypse can be related to the cataclysmic celestial fire which, according to traditional Stoic concepts, is ordained by the cosmic logos in order to renew the universe; however, in *Civil War* Lucan does not see cyclic nature, but a terminal destruction (Sklenář 1999: 284); Johnson (1987) bases his study of the poem on Lucanian nihilism, the ‘Stoic machine gone bad’ (1987: 10).

<sup>127</sup> ‘...Lucan, in spite of the comparative scarcity of *explicit* literary self-reference in his poem, identifies strongly with his two main protagonists...’ (Masters 1992: 7).

the battlefield of Pharsalus, where Caesar commands high ground – he oversees all action, hands weapons to his soldiers, and controls the battle line. This pattern of behaviour is also seen towards the end of the poem when, trapped in the palace in Alexandria, the general defends himself and his soldiers from the Egyptian attack: ‘But everywhere is Caesar present | In defence: he repulses these attacks with sword and these with fire, | And while blockaded – so great is his firmness of mind – he performs | The work of a besieger’ (10.487-91). The portrayal of multitasking Caesar is reminiscent of episodes in the *Gallic War*, in particular the battle against the Nervii (2.20), discussed in the previous chapter.

In book 6, Caesar blockades the Pompeians at Dyrrachium on the Adriatic coast. In order to carry out the building of the towers and ditches, Caesar shatters whole mountains (6.38-9), an image alluding to superhuman power akin to that of Homeric hero. However, both narrator and audience are aware that although epic Caesar may be able to encompass the whole action of the blockade, it is his troops who shatter the mountains and guard each post of the line. Therefore, Lucan identifies ubiquitous Caesar by the close connection between the general and his army; however, whereas Caesar ascribes positive value to his abilities to inspire loyalty in his troops, Lucan perceives certain demonic powers possessed by the general. The *Commentaries* present Caesar’s benevolent attitude to his soldiers – support, understanding, and humane treatment, whereas Lucan emphasizes the power of Caesar to control his soldiers and to evoke their fanatical devotion. The relationship between Caesar and his army is twisted and taken to the extreme – the soldiers become a monstrous totality of minds and bodies, infatuated by demonic energy. Like the limbs of a gigantic body walking the earth, they can reach

further than anyone else and secure Caesar's presence everywhere.<sup>128</sup> It is through the fusion of Caesarean energy and his army that the epic Caesar who imposes the new time is created. And although Lucan implies Caesar's dependence on his soldiers which equivocally questions his supernatural abilities, he also commends Caesar's leadership qualities. At Pharsalus, his troops are so well nourished by the leader's energy that they appear capable of action as independent agents of speed. Concluding his inspired speech to his soldiers, Caesar exclaims: 'But I delay my destiny by detaining you with these words | When you are raging for the fight. Forgive me for putting off the | Battle' (7.295-6). Having reached the peak of his powers, Caesar momentarily and, almost as a mockery of all attempts to delay him, restrains his troops only to release them with even greater energy towards bloody victory.

Since the poem does not feature divine characters, it is tempting to ascribe divine facets to Caesar's extraordinary powers. In his relationship with his soldiers, the general influences his subordinates almost to the point of possessing their bodies and minds, not unlike Homeric and Virgilian gods. Moreover, Lucan explicitly compares Caesar's terrifying presence on the battlefield of Pharsalus to that of Bellona or Mars (7.567-71). Nevertheless, the poet abstains from granting Caesar divine status; instead, he establishes his character as a more primordial and demonic entity.

### **Witches, Pythia and Caesar**

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<sup>128</sup> An appropriate image is given by Shakespeare's Cassius: 'Why, man, he doth bestride the narrow world | like a Colossus; and we petty men | walk under his huge legs...' (*Julius Caesar*, I.2). In the light of Lucan's thunderbolt simile, it is interesting that Green (1991: 244) equates Caesar's legionary to Jupiter's thunderbolts.

In his desperate anger towards Caesar in the scene of the battle at Pharsalus, Lucan exclaims in an apostrophe: ‘But you, Caesar, what gods of wickedness, | what Eumenides did you invoke with ritual?’ (7.168-9). The image of Caesar performing dark rituals suggests a peculiar connection between the general and two ‘weird sisters’ featuring in two extraordinary episodes related to divination: the Delphic oracle, consulted by the Pompeian Appius in book 5, and Erichtho, the infamous witch of Thessaly, visited by Pompey’s son Sextus in book 6. Appius hears a prophecy only about his own death on the Euboean coast (5.194-7); the dead soldier, brought back to life by Erichtho, foretells the deaths of Pompey and his sons, as well as describing tumult in the underworld (6.777-819). However, the remarkable ‘witch triangle’ – Caesar, Pythia, and Erichtho – emerges not because of specific relationships between the characters, but because all three share an access to the knowledge of totality of time.<sup>129</sup>

In the Delphi episode, the prophetess, fearing for her life and sanity, attempts to feign a prophecy at first, but is forced by Appius to approach the tripods and consult Apollo proper. In her trance, she can experience all time:

All time converges into  
a single heap and all the centuries oppress her unhappy breast,  
the chain of happenings so lengthy is revealed and all the future  
struggles to the light...(5.177-80).

The Pythia is granted a glimpse of the mind of the god, but the totality of being cannot be fully comprehended and may have fatal consequences for the mortals.

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<sup>129</sup> The allusion Lucan makes to Caesar and witchcraft is noted by Lapidge (1979: 369).

An omnipotent witch, Erichtho is capable of stopping time, so that ‘postponed by lengthened night the day comes to a halt’ (6.462) and ‘the racing universe is paralysed once the spell is heard’ (6.463). Her prowess is so great that she is able to halt the motion of the universe, which results in a temporal standstill. When Sextus beseeches her to predict the future, she proves her ability to transcend temporal boundaries: the corpse she finds in order to bring back to life in a zombie-form to perform her divination seems to have come from the battlefield of Pharsalus, since no other battle has taken place yet in Thessaly.<sup>130</sup> Thus, in addition to her power to reverse natural cycles of life by bringing a corpse back to life, she also disregards temporal continuity in history and the poem’s narrative.

Interestingly, both the Pythia and Erichtho are presented as creatures with special relationship with the gods: the Pythia acts as an interface between Apollo and the mortals, and Erichtho’s abilities to paralyze the universe pose a challenge even to the gods themselves. However, the divine characters, traditionally featuring in classical epic, are omitted in the *Civil War*. As a poet writing historical epic, Lucan may have disposed of the divine characters to leave matters to be decided on a secular level, as it were; it is also possible that Lucan excluded the divine characters in order for the moral blame for the actions of civil war to remain human. Although Lucan is more inclined to accept that, disgusted by the Civil War, the gods have abandoned the world, the numerous references to divine powers in the poem point to his acceptance of certain divine force.<sup>131</sup> The

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<sup>130</sup> Noted by O’Higgins (1988: 219).

<sup>131</sup> On the historic epic and the gods, see Feeney (1993: 250-312); the moral responsibility of humans in the *Civil War* is discussed by Ahl (1976: 295). Lucan demonstrates a rather contradictory attitude towards the gods – he: ‘...does not believe in their existence, and yet he is ready to curse them for their indifference to mankind’ (Bartsch 1997: 108-109); Feeney notes that the gods’ anger is present in the poem (1993: 272-3); and yet, one can hardly fail to notice Lucan’s (agnostic?) comment that the sacred shields descended for

problematic void left by the lack of gods as characters is filled by fearful sort of quasi-gods, creatures such as the Pythia, Erichtho, and Caesar. To exist outside temporal boundaries may be considered a divine characteristic, but the supremacy of these three characters lies precisely in their power to exist temporally as humans and yet to be capable of detaching themselves from the dependency of time. As a master of speed and manipulator of time, Caesar's power lies precisely in his simultaneous existence inside and outside temporal frames. Thus, the similarities between the prophetess, the witch and Caesar should also serve as a demonstration of Lucan's reluctance to grant Caesar a true divine status.<sup>132</sup> Also, by referring to Caesar as to someone with witchcraft skills, Lucan grants him deeper awareness of temporal structures akin to that of the Pythia and Erichtho.

The complexity of the quasi-divinity of Caesar is further reinforced by his connection to Fortune. In book 5, irritated by the delay of the troops in Italy, disguised, Caesar attempts to sail back to Brundisium in a fishing boat. The poor fisherman agrees to transport the stranger despite the approaching storm; however, when the tempest grows to apocalyptic dimensions Caesar reveals himself with a superb dramatic gesture and assures the pilot that Fortune would not desert him. As the vessel becomes a helpless plaything of the waves, finally '...Caesar thinks the perils worthy of his destiny' (5.654). In what seems to be his happiest hour, he exclaims: '[H]ow mighty is the gods' toil to throw me down...' (5.655). Even when realizing that this moment may be his last, Caesar

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king Numa from Heaven may have simply been blown away from their owners by a fierce wind in some distant corner of the world (9.471-80).

<sup>132</sup> Caesar is depicted as a man with the might of a god – not immortal, but not afraid to die and thus triumph over death (Ahl 1976: 284-5); Ahl attributes the same quality to Cato, although I believe the two characters differ in their expression of might. Matthews (2008: 19) claims that Caesar *stands in* for Vergil's god.



plans his future as a legend – he does not want to be buried – ‘provided I am always feared, by every land awaited’ (5.671).<sup>133</sup> Although it may be argued that Caesar is given the traditional sea adventure of the quest hero (for example, Odysseus), the futility of this otherwise grandiloquent episode can easily be considered comic and absurd, and moreover, given Caesar’s efficiency – a waste of time.<sup>134</sup> Nevertheless, the scene becomes more comprehensible if regarded as a successful proof of Caesar’s connection with Fortune, which does not falter even when the hero’s arrogance reaches *hybristic* heights. Caesar survives – taken back to the shore by the tenth wave, he returns to his worried soldiers and to continue his conquest with belief in Fortune now even firmer. Furthermore, as well as an affirmation of Caesar being Fortune’s favourite, the storm episode may be taken to demonstrate the inevitability of Fate which has decreed Caesarean survival and subsequent victory, only to lead to the murder of the general.<sup>135</sup> At Pharsalus, ‘fate was racing on’ (7.505), and in Egypt, the enemy soldiers are incapable of assailing adequately, because ‘The Fates say no and Fortune maintains the function of a wall’ (10.485).<sup>136</sup> Historical Caesar’s own comments after Dyrrachium denounce blind faith in Fortune: ‘[I]f everything does not turn out favourably, we must help fortune by

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<sup>133</sup> Ahl (1976: 208) considers this ‘a perverse kind of immortality’ and contrasts Caesar to Aeneas and Odysseus, who dread drowning as ignoble death. However, the point is that Caesar’s immortality is in fact a theatrical disappearance shrouded in mystery. A similar idea is expressed by the narrator in relation to Pompey’s death (8.865-9): he claims that it is for the better that Pompey is not confined to a grave so the evidence of his death may vanish.

<sup>134</sup> The episode is considered comic and absurd by Johnson (1987: 105-7).

<sup>135</sup> O’Higgins (1988) suggests that accepting himself as *vates*, Lucan relates himself to Erichtho and the Pythia; as prophetic figures, they can interfere with life, but have no powers to alter Fate altogether.

<sup>136</sup> According to Dick (1967: 236), Fatum and Fortuna are used more widely and with a variety of meanings in Lucan than in any other epic poet; Lucan is aware of the difference between the two (chance and destiny) and the vagueness in defining them is due to his own doubts as to whether fate or fortune governs human affairs (*Civil War* 2.7-13). Interestingly, Pompey is also associated with Fortuna (Dick 1967: 239). Drawing on the close relationship between Fortune and Venus in Roman culture, Ahl (1976: 292) believes that Lucan’s Fortune is a substitution for Venus, Caesar’s legendary ancestress.

some efforts of our own' (*Civil War* 3.73). Therefore, Lucan's portrayal of Caesar as depending on Fortune stands in stark contrast with historical Caesar's pragmatic views.

Although the epic progression of Caesar in the poem follows the logic of the *Commentaries* and consists of similar elements, nevertheless, it undergoes substantial modification. As well as placing these elements within the generic form of epic, Lucan takes them to extremity in order to demonstrate the unnaturalness of Caesarean power: the notion of *furor* triggers celerity, omnipresence is guaranteed by berserk warriors and the temporal flow is altered by demonic/witchcraft powers. However, since the historicity of his subject does not allow Lucan to deny Caesarean supremacy completely, the effects of the Caesarean manipulation of temporality remain at the core of the epic. These effects are the establishment of performative suspension of time and Lucan's opposition to Caesarean control of historical time.

### **The world is a stage**

Before his fateful defeat at Pharsalus, Pompey has a dream, which takes him back to the years of his greatest popularity and renown; appropriately, he sees himself seated in his own theatre. The theatre metaphor holds fast: Lucan affirms that the battle will be observed in the whole world (7.204); in his speech, Pompey evokes the performative aspect for each soldier on the battlefield:

[...] imagine your mothers, leaning from Rome's highest  
city-walls with hair streaming, are urging you to battle;

imagine that the aged senators, prevented by their years  
from joining the army, are laying at your feet their white and hallowed hair  
(7.369-72)

The catastrophic importance of the Civil War prompts Lucan to create associations with a savage spectacle in which the world is gradually immersed. In the exclamation which I have mentioned above, ‘In vain are these Greeks inspired by confidence in my speed.| Although we are hurrying to the western region of the world,| there is time to destroy Massilia’ (3. 357-360), Caesar demonstrates his capability of halting the flow of time for the whole world in order to besiege a city that stands in his way. Held in suspension, time becomes *theatrical* time, and the performance of the siege of Massilia takes place for the whole world to behold. The fact that Caesar is not present during the siege only reinforces the point that the epic dimension of Caesar’s power is to be found in his omnipresent spirit. The capacity to manipulate the progress of time allows Caesar to establish a distinctive ‘virtual’ reality, which entails substitution of ‘real’ time for performative suspension of time. Since this Caesarean reality hosts some of the elements of the performativity of war treated by historical Caesar himself, Lucan once again encourages the audience to draw parallels between the two works. The chapter on Caesar’s *Commentaries* focused on specific manifestations of performativity, such as the gaze, speeches, the notion of disguising/acting, as well as dramaturgical elements – *hybris* and *peripeteia*. Within the context of self-representation, Caesarean appearances are aimed at punishing enemy *hybris*. Lucan, however, demonstrating consistency in his subversion of Caesarean assets, represents Caesar as the very embodiment of *hybris*, thus

in effect negating his ability to bring positive *peripeteia* and to turn the tide of battle. Instead, Lucan gives prominence to the performativity of war founded almost exclusively on the relationship between Caesar and his soldiers and comprising of the gaze and visibility of commander, soldiers, and action. Lucan also adds the very important graphic depiction of death, an aspect of the war Caesar is careful to avoid. Lucan's decision to present the visual horrors of war is directly related to his criticism of two very characteristic features of Caesar's self-representation, namely reason and benevolence. In the *Commentaries*, Caesar exposes his enemies as irrational, possessed by anger; to their conduct, he opposes reason, benevolence, or impartiality. Lucan, however, demonizes Caesarean energy precisely by infusing it with the negative traits of *furor*. Moreover, Caesar is presented as the one invading Roman territory, bringing his barbarian forces to violate the sacred land of the Republic. Thus, the emphasis on the irrational fanaticism of Caesar's soldiers can be seen as Lucan's reaction to the identification of Caesar's Pompeian enemies as barbarians in the *Commentaries*.

Caesarean authority, founded on his relationship with his soldiers, is determined by the power of the gaze of the commander and the importance of participation of the soldiers. Few notable examples of individual appearances reveal the importance of the performative element and visibility in order to sustain Caesarean energy. Laelius' speech (1.360-90), spoken to dispel the soldiers' momentary hesitation to attack their home country, exhorts the army and encourages Caesar to believe that his troops are ready not only to kill their kin for him, but also to storm Rome itself if it stands in their way. Caesarean soldiers emerge as irrational, fanatical mob, ready to sacrifice even their own

family on the altar of their general.<sup>137</sup> The speech can also be considered an initiation of performance, Laelius acting to his comrades and seeking the confirmation of Caesar's gaze. The general also engages in performance for his troops: in book 3, he orders the trees of an ancient grove, home of spirits and supernatural events, to be cut down and used for the siege of Massilia (3.399-452). When the soldiers, frightened by the sacrilege, hesitate to fulfil the order, their fear of the gods is balanced against the fear of Caesar, who takes an axe and with the words 'Let none of you need hesitate to cut down the wood: mine is the guilt – believe it!' (436-7), strikes the tree trunk.<sup>138</sup> An instance of *impietas* and *furor*, this scene exemplifies Caesar's performative nature and establishes a dynamic in which the observer can easily interchange places with the observed. Similar awareness of the relativity of performative acts is demonstrated by Caesar in the *Commentaries*, particularly in the fighting taking place at Alesia in the *Gallic War* book 7.

The way Caesar deals with the mutiny in book 5 reveals the essentially performative mechanisms of the connection between him and the army. In what sounds suspiciously like the voice of the narrator, the soldiers accuse his general of disregarding their needs and claim that conquering Rome should be enough to quench his ambition. However, in the face of these charges, 'only the sanity of his unbridled troops...' (5.309) is what worries Caesar. He does not allow an emotional discharge of his army's energy and replaces one extreme emotion with another. By calling them 'cowardly civilians',

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<sup>137</sup> According to George (1988: 336-7), the army is first driven by natural impulse towards state and family (*Oikeiosis*); however, Laelius turns the tide, changes the soldiers' impulse, and declares that he and the soldiers are the extension of Caesar's will. And, as Johnson (1987: 109) put it: 'Lucan is not interested in making power intelligible by translating its irrational drives into rational categories'.

<sup>138</sup> Even though he is favoured by Fortune, by performing this sacrilege, Caesar is related to *nefas* throughout the narrative (Dick 1967: 238).

and placing them as the *audience* of his future triumphs, not *on stage* as participants, Caesar threatens them with the prospect of submitting to ‘normal’, non-performative, and therefore insignificant, time flow (5.318-64).

Still feeling the shadow of rebellion and to demonstrate his own bloodthirstiness, at Pharsalus Caesar ‘inspects’ the soldiers (7.560-5): he scorns those whose blades are not yet bloodstained, or those whose hands tremble. In effect, every soldier in Caesar’s army is set into a perpetual emotional state of a berserk warrior; moreover, the general’s presence and most importantly, his gaze, encourages the frenzy. A new dramatic time, with the warrior centre stage, emerges, and the whole world is immersed in his personal battle performed for Caesar. The premise that proximity to the Caesarean gaze is very important to guarantee success is well demonstrated by three different episodes of failure: Scaeva, fighting near Caesar, and Curio and Vulteius, dying away from Caesar.

The exploits of Scaeva, one of Caesar’s centurions, offers an allusion to conventional epic *aristeia*. Scaeva is resolved not to leave his position at the breached defences at Dyrrachium and, as an uncanny evidence of the spirit of Caesar protecting him, despite his numerous wounds he survives for an unnaturally long period of time (6.138-262).<sup>139</sup> The character of Scaeva features in Caesar’s *Commentaries* – however, instead of extending the narrative of his heroic resistance as Lucan does, Caesar briefly commends the centurion; part of the ‘missed dramatic opportunities’, with its lack of visual depiction of violence, this scene serves as tacit reminder of the greatness of Caesarean soldiers.

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<sup>139</sup> The performative aspects of the Caesarean soldiers, and particularly Scaeva’s *aristeia*, are discussed by Leigh (1997).

The cases of Vulteius' and his troops' suicide on a raft, surrounded by enemies (4.474-581) and Curio, defeated in Africa (4.715-98), demonstrate that Caesarean troops fighting without their leader physically present, or in the vicinity, are doomed. To be seen defeated by Caesar is considered the greatest shame – this is evident in the episode of Curio's death, treated both in the *Commentaries* and in the poem. The sense of shame is also explicitly manifested in Vulteius' scene: Vulteius and his men, trapped on a raft decide to kill themselves, rather than face captivity. In the context of the nature of civil warfare, it could be argued whether Vulteius' decision is the most rational, but certainly it is the most dignified. More importantly, as a clear performative statement of denial of shameful defeat, the Caesareans commit suicide in the daylight, in full view of the enemy.<sup>140</sup>

In his *Commentaries*, Caesar notably avoids describing the deaths of his enemies, including the murder of Pompey. Although Lucan criticizes Pompey's ambitions, he nevertheless grants him eulogy and apotheosis (9.1-18). And yet, his death is described in gruesome and naturalistic detail, characteristic of every scene of violence in the poem. The sense of disintegration, rightly taken to serve as a metaphor for the destruction of the Roman world, finds expression in the visual depiction of breaking human bodies.<sup>141</sup> To the scenes of dying, de-personalized humans, disfigured by war, Lucan opposes a distinctive Caesarean asset – his *clementia*. Since Caesar initiates the new performative reality of Civil War, in order to exist temporally, the participants in the conflict must be subsumed into their leader's world. This alternative temporality of Caesar acts as theatrical time, a dimension which not only exists parallel to reality, but transcends it – at

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<sup>140</sup> On daylight as guaranteeing visibility of death, see Saylor (1990 294-6); this episode is not featured in Caesar's *Commentaries* – Avery (1993) argues that it has been lost.

<sup>141</sup> The mutilated, violated body is related to a 'prescription for the human psyche' by Bartsch (1997: 13).

the end of the war, the world as an external entity will be replaced by the world of Caesar. In the light of the notion of temporal control, Caesar's *clementia*, the mercy shown to defeated enemies regardless of their rank, emerges as a way to grant *time* to people. A good example of the process of initiation to the new Caesarean temporality is the scene of the fraternization of Pompeian and Caesarean soldiers from the two opposing camps in Spain (book 4). It results in the slaughter of the Caesarean troops in Petreius' camp and the sparing of the Pompeians by Caesar. However, by sparing the enemy soldiers, Caesar gains control and can claim ownership over their lives. Lucan questions the value of *clementia* as means of salvation, especially in the case of captives accepted in Caesar's army, doomed to continue fighting in the War; thus, in a sense, the true implication of *clementia* can emerge as a cruel punishment.<sup>142</sup> And yet, by setting *clementia* against the visual horrors of death, Lucan awkwardly poses the question whether it is preferable and more dignified to suffer and to cease to exist temporally, or to join Caesar and live in his time.

More importantly, even though he objects to Caesarean reality, Lucan in fact lives in a world to great extent conditioned by Caesarean *clementia* and its Augustan offshoot. The historicity of the subject allows the performative reality of Caesar to transcend the narrative and to affect the reality of Lucan the author. Painfully aware of this, Lucan accordingly extends his opposition to the Caesarean bias beyond the limits of the narrative and sets his poem as a weapon against the prevailing historical actuality.

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<sup>142</sup> According to Seneca, since a person loses his life if he owes it to another, mercy could be seen as revenge (*De Clementia*, 1.21.1-3); thus Leigh (1997:68): 'The point which emerges so strongly from Seneca's *De Clementia* is that the acts of forgiveness and the acts of brutality are two sides of the same absolutist coin'.



## Control of historical time

Epic Caesar commands time, grants time to the conquered and conducts a war aiming to put an end to the Republic and to the whole world of reason. Within the narrative, Caesar is bold, ambitious and unstoppable, and yet his victory is not necessarily certain, especially since the ending of the poem leaves him in a situation of peril in Alexandria. However, posterity has seen the Caesarean victory and Lucan, as the writer of historical epic, ought to accept the inevitable. The empire of Alexander the Great disintegrated after his death, but (un)fortunately for Lucan, the Caesarean legacy not only prevailed in his own time, but also affects our reading of the poem, two millennia later.<sup>143</sup> Therefore, the second strand of Caesar's time control issue in Lucan's poem can be identified as the command over historical time. Caesar's success in influencing historical time both by his actual existence and the propaganda of the *Commentaries* provokes the author's fierce opposition. I have already demonstrated that Lucan encourages action which aims to delay Caesar. He also interferes on meta-level, as it were, as the author who lives in the reality determined by the very effects of the Caesarean successful personal propaganda. Not being able to deny completely Caesarean claims to authority over historical representation, Lucan nevertheless proclaims his poetic authority to judge the evils of Civil War.

In book 9, Caesar is transported by Lucan to the remains of Troy, where 'even the ruins suffered oblivion' (9.969). In what seems almost like a comic relief episode, a rather enigmatic, ghostly guide tells Caesar not to disturb the shade of Hector – the

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<sup>143</sup> '[T]he temporal limits placed upon Alexander were not placed upon Caesar' (Ahl 1976: 224).

general has stepped on his grave by accident. The eerie presence of the guide is rightly suggested to be none other than the poet, who has been following Caesar's victorious advance like a shadow.<sup>144</sup> Indeed, it is on the ancient battlefield of Troy, where Lucan, with his poetic talent, challenges the power of the dictator and god-to-be:

O how sacred and immense the task of bards! You snatch everything

From death and to mortals you give immortality.

Caesar, do not be touched by envy of their sacred fame;

[...]

The future ages will read me and you; our Pharsalia

Shall live and we shall be condemned to darkness by no era. (9.980-86)

Epic Caesar has proved the master of time for the world he inhabits as a character; however, in this scene Lucan transcends his own narrative to engage directly with the claim of historical Caesar for historical supremacy. Lucan is ready to defend his right to question the validity of Caesarean self-representation virtually to his last breath. The importance of this episode lies in the sublimation of the voices of narrator and poet, and the resulting unification of epic and historical Caesar. In Troy the borders between reality and fiction are blurred and the true indeterminacy of history is revealed. In this crucial moment, Caesar projects himself from the past (poetic reality) towards the future (historical reality), whereas Lucan reverses the process – his poetic craft allows him to reach and attempt to modify the past. His odium towards the Civil War entails an

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<sup>144</sup> Rossi (2001: 320-1); Rossi discusses the ambiguity of Caesar's simultaneous knowledge and ignorance of the meaning of the ruined stones at Troy: some particular events and places are visible, others, such as Hector's grave or the altar of Jupiter, where Priam was slain, are not.

expression of his support for Pompey: in a remark about the reception of this conflict in posterity, Lucan claims that when future races recall this battle they will side with Magnus (7.207-13). These future generations are doomed to be born in slavery (7.640), reminding us of the association of Caesar with foreign invader. Lucan depicts Pompey's apotheosis and expresses his desire to act as an agent of history by wishing that he would be conferred the task to take Pompey's ashes to Rome (8.841-850).

Yet, although Lucan wishes '...to induce his readers to deny the truths of historical time...',<sup>145</sup> by creating a poetic narrative closely based on the *Commentaries* and elevating his character towards epic dimensions, Lucan in fact reinforces the Caesarean spirit. Despite his alleged Republican stance and hatred for the authoritarian regime which he takes Caesar to symbolize, the poet is nevertheless possessed by a perceivable, almost masochistic, urge to depict his character with all his superhuman energy and ambition. Even the critics who do not favour Caesar as the hero of the poem admit that 'Lucan's admiration for his skill, swiftness, and general physical bearing is evident'.<sup>146</sup> However, if the work is seen as reaction to the *Commentaries*, the inherent contradiction between the narrator Lucan and the poet Lucan's political views does not appear paradoxical. If Lucan is considered as setting himself as an adversary to Caesar, the poet's strategy in the depiction of his enemy is in fact reminiscent of Caesar's strategy in the *Commentaries*: by highlighting the enemy's prowess, the author also points to his own superiority.<sup>147</sup> Lucan is emotionally engaged with both subject and

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<sup>145</sup> Leigh (1997: 27).

<sup>146</sup> Holliday (1969: 14). Ahl (1976: 190) follows similar line of thought: although Lucan loathed the regime brought by Caesar's victory in the Civil War, he could not deny the general's clemency and phenomenal military skill.

<sup>147</sup> On the literary/propaganda strategy of praising the enemy, in particular evident in Caesar's attitude towards Vercingetorix, see Will (2008: 62). The tension between 'Caesar's implicit prominence and his explicit vulnerability' registered by Masters (1992: 257) and the fact that Lucan gives Caesar 'pride of

consequences of the Civil War and condemns civil conflicts in general on the grounds of his position as a citizen and patriot. Nonetheless, he strives to create history and channels his emotional charge into a narrative of enormous scale, his obsession with the irrational and the twisted reinforcing the catastrophic dimensions of the conflict. Therefore, I believe that Lucan utilizes the subject of the Civil War with the intention to portray himself as the poet who holds supremacy in depicting historical events and opposes the world order set by Caesar. Caesar has conditioned the historical reality of Lucan, and, Lucan, in his own *aristeia*, as it were, attempts to condition the representation of Caesar.<sup>148</sup> In addition, by its very generic nature, Lucan's poetic reality is also performative and, similarly to Caesar's historical representation, should be considered part of a performance-reception cycle. The possible recitation of certain passages of the works would have certainly added an extra layer of perception of reality and temporality similarly to the effects of the performative nature of the *Commentaries* a century earlier. Lucan's death is an ample demonstration of both his poetic self-esteem and desire to transform the last moments of his life into a memorable performance: allegedly, as the blood ran out of his opened veins, Lucan recited lines from the *Civil War*.<sup>149</sup>

The result of the battle for historical validity prompted by Lucan's relentless hatred towards the Civil War and his love-hate relationship with Caesar is that the poem has indeed become a counterpart to Caesar's *Commentaries*. Together with Lucan's

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place only to displace him at the last moment' (state of peril in Alexandria) (1992: 258) is exemplary of the above strategy.

<sup>148</sup> The idea that Caesar owns Roman time is expressed by Henderson (1998:184); see Green (1991:254) on the difference between Homer and Lucan who 'wrote' history and Virgil who consciously created myth.

<sup>149</sup> Lucan's death (Suetonius *Lucan. Lives of Illustrious Men*; Tacitus, *Annals* 15.70). Statius (2.7.46-47) describes the learned and prominent audience of Lucan. According to Duff (1960: 260), the artificiality created by the use of rhetoric devices, such as allusions and hyperbolae 'detracts from strong simplicity and pathos'. Indeed, Quintilian (10.90) classifies Lucan as rhetorician, not a poet. On the performance of epic in the first century AD, see Markus (2000).

sources – Livy and Assinius Pollio (both accounts now lost) – it influenced ancient historiography.<sup>150</sup> At various points in my discussion, I have noted certain scenes, which are not featured in Caesar’s account of the Civil War – such are the Rubicon scene, the episode with the storm and the mutiny of Caesar’s troops. All three, with the addition of the encounter between Caesar and Cleopatra, are presented by ancient historians and certain accounts bear more similarities to Lucan than others. From considerations of brevity, I will not engage in detailed analysis of these specific instances of possible Lucanian influence – these are noted and referenced at the appropriate places in my study. It will suffice to recognize that the fact that an *epic* work influences later historical accounts implies that by the time he reaches Cassius Dio, Appian, Plutarch and Suetonius, the image of Julius Caesar would be rich in allusions to the terrifyingly charismatic master of time who sets in motion the epic *Civil War*.

To conclude, in constructing Caesar’s character, Lucan engages in deliberate subversion of the virtues fostered by Caesar’s self-representation. The poet’s strategy is to undermine the major elements of Caesarean propaganda – efficiency, omnipresence, reason, and benevolence – by setting them against his vision of the general as initiator of a conflict that brings destruction to the Roman state. As a result, the protagonist is defined by *furor*, witchcraft powers, and irrationality; his *clementia* is depicted against the backdrop of a world in which horrific death and disfigurement has deprived life of its value. Nevertheless, by following the logic of the ‘epic progression’ and incorporating

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<sup>150</sup> Appian is most likely influenced by Lucan in his depiction of Caesar ordering the destruction of his camp palisade at Pharsalus, so the soldiers can rush towards the enemy lines with no camp defences to retreat back to. Caesar himself does not mention such anti-strategic order. On Lucan as source for Appian and Florus, see Perrin (1884) and Bucher (2005). Lintott (1971: 488) considers the poem to be an important work, which ‘represents an intermediate stage between the contemporary account by Caesar of his defeat of the Pompeians and the later versions in Plutarch, Appian and Cassius Dio’. However, Duff (1960: 256-7) is critical: Lucan should not be accepted as historical source at its face value, he does not supply missing material from Livy.

performative elements, characteristic for the *Commentaries*, Lucan establishes a connection between the two works and sustains both the subject matter and its protagonist. The reaction against Caesarean historical legacy emerges as the guiding principle of the poet's creative process; consequently, the work acquires importance as a historical source and stands out as a crucial phase of the development of Caesar's character in history and drama.

## **Chapter 3: Transcending self-representation: epic-dramatic**

### **Caesar as character in ancient historiography**

In order to analyse the transformation of historic Julius Caesar into a character of drama, it is necessary to establish a sense of continuity between Caesarean self-representation and its treatment by ancient historians and biographers. This chapter investigates the extent to which the ‘epic-dramatic’ fusion of Caesar’s self-representation transfers to ancient historiography, which plays a crucial role as a source material for the creation of the Caesar myth. I analyse material from the works of Caesar’s anonymous continuators, Suetonius, Plutarch, Appian, Cassius Dio, Velleius Paterculus, Florus and Nicolaus of Damascus; occasional references to other accounts and Cicero’s speeches and letters are also made. These sources, although crucial for the reception of Caesar, also evoke the question of historical truth beneath the representation consisting of material recycled by the historians (for example the lost accounts of Livy and Pollio), their inventions, based on specific agendas, and the material that has been transmitted directly from Caesar’s *Commentaries*. My approach may appear to take various depictions of Caesar at their face value, disregarding the bias of each author and lacking interest in probing beneath the surface. However, the key notion of my analysis is to define Caesar by his performativity and self-dramatization; thus by staying on the surface, as it were, this study emphasizes the importance of this surface as the only ‘reality’ in which Caesar could be perceived. The diversity of character traits point to a

Caesar who operates in performative mode throughout his life; the highly theatricalized context of the late Republic only enhances this notion.<sup>151</sup>

## **Losing oneself in the eyes of history: performing epic control of time beyond the *Commentaries***

### **Speed**

In his *Commentaries*, the extraordinary speed of Caesar allows him to evolve into a superhuman or rather quasi-divine figure; active day and night, he is ubiquitous and transcends ordinary temporality. The *Alexandrian*, *African* and *Spanish wars* complete the chronology of Caesar's wars fought almost continuously for twelve years between 58 BC and 45 BC. They were attached to the Caesarean literary corpus by A. Hirtius, who also composed book 8 of the *Gallic war* and is suspected of being the author of the *Alexandrian War*.<sup>152</sup> Although part of the Caesarean corpus, these works present a distinctive, almost immediate reception of Caesar and are fundamental for his evolution as a character. The authors, albeit following the image created in Caesar's books, nevertheless enrich the interpretation of his personality in new situations.

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<sup>151</sup> Pelling (2009a) investigates the issues of multifaceted Caesar through the different focalisation in ancient historians' accounts – for example, in Suetonius Caesar's viewpoint is dominating, whereas Cassius Dio attempts to describe everyone's viewpoints, sometimes leading to Caesar's loss of control of the narrative, as it were. Yavetz (1983:183) explains the love-hate 'complex' around Caesar with his lack of extremity; 'In many ways the uncertainty about Caesar and how to judge him began with the Romans, who admired his great conquests, but deplored other aspects of his life and career...' (Goldsworthy 2006: 517).

<sup>152</sup> Murphy (1986: 309-13) argues that the difference between the treatment of *felicitas* in the *Alexandrian War* and book 8 of the *Gallic War* attests to their different authorship.



The epic aspects of Caesar's control of temporality in the *Commentaries* are almost entirely founded on *celeritas*, with its various emanations: night action, ability to be in many places at once, gaining the upper hand in conflicts against faster enemies, and altering nature, rather than merely utilizing it. Although each book by the continuators has a distinctive style, Caesar remains rather consistent in his efficiency and speed. A good example is a campaign narrated in the *Alexandrian War*: from the river Nile, following the entire imperial south-north axis, Caesar travels to Asia Minor, where he confronts Pharnaces, king of Pontus, who, aware of the Civil War, attempts to regain some of his former territories. The battle at Zela puts a swift end to Pharnaces' ambitions and inspires Caesar to send the legendary 'Veni. Vidi. Vici.', later inscribed on a triumphal procession placard. In the final chapter, Caesar travels by land through the provinces, then heads towards Rome and arrives in Italy sooner than expected (78).

The *African war* presents a rather unique Caesar, who although not strategically reckless, shows impatience occasionally on the verge of neurosis. His first appearance is on the shores of Lilybaeum in the winter of 47 BC, just a few months after returning from Asia Minor; the general has pitched his tent on the shore and ordered his troops to remain on the ships, waiting for the opportune moment to leave for Africa. After disembarking some of the troops on the African shore, in constant need for reinforcements and supplies Caesar orders the rest of the army to be transported immediately. The day after the dispatch had been sent Caesar already accuses the army of delay – day and night he keeps his eyes and thoughts fixed steadfastly on the sea (26). The author is consistent in his portrayal of the general, whose unsettling impatience we can almost visualize – always on the move, demanding equal expediency from everyone.

The *Spanish War* stands out as the most incomplete and corrupted text; Caesar's notable absence from the narrative alludes to the author's lack of direct access and marginal knowledge of Caesar's important decisions and speeches/appearances. The only emphasis on speed is at the beginning: the general had sent for cavalry escort and even though his lieutenants Q. Pedius and Q. Fabius Maximus organized it, Caesar arrives sooner than expected without waiting for the cavalry (2).

Since other speed-related aspects, such as night action and the nature-civilization clash, are notably lacking the prominence accorded to them in the *Commentaries*, the continuators mainly sustain the general's aura of efficiency by emphasizing his speed. By occasionally adding a measure of nervousness, they add credibility to a full-bodied character whilst inevitably allowing for flaws in his impatient and energetic nature.

In civilian life, Caesar successfully blends speed with efficiency. He is reported to have travelled from Rome to the Rhone in only seven days, his speed measuring at a hundred Roman miles per day.<sup>153</sup> Although it is not clear exactly how much sleep he needed and whether he always worked at night, as we are led to believe in the *Gallic War*, Plutarch notes that Caesar could dictate letters from on horseback and gave directions to two or more assistants at the same time. It was his habit to read and sign documents whilst dining and attending the games. During a dinner, taking part in a discussion of death, Caesar famously exclaimed that for him sudden death is preferable. Expressing such opinion points to *celeritas* – apparently Caesar detested the prospect of planning his own funeral while lingering on his deathbed. Being confined to one place

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<sup>153</sup> On Caesar's speed, see Suetonius (57); it is mentioned by Cicero (*Letters to Atticus* 146(7.22)) who also ascribes Caesarean speed to Antony (*Letters to Atticus* 422(16.10)). Caesarean speed is also noted by Sheldon (2005), who points out that the average speed of messengers during Augustus' time was fifty Roman miles a day. Departures and returns of Roman generals as important civic spectacles are discussed by Sumi (2005).

seems to have caused Caesar an almost painful uneasiness – according to Appian, it is inactivity that brought him illnesses.<sup>154</sup>

In chapter 1, I focused on the lack of direct speeches and the importance of his only *oratio recta* in the *Civil War* before Pharsalus – a powerful exhortation of a single sentence. The way Caesar is presented as a speaker can elucidate the different attitudes towards his expediency as well as his theatricality. By constructing Caesar as a strong, verbally conditioned identity, historiography diversifies his self-expression. A good illustration is the contrast between Dio Cassius's lengthy speeches and the short, sharp utterances carefully crafted by Caesar in his *Commentaries*, the accounts of the continuators and the biographers.<sup>155</sup>

Caesar's direct speech in the works of his continuators generally concerns reproach of disobedient allies (*Alexandrian War*, 68; *African War*, 54). Interestingly, a virtuoso speech comes from the least significant work, the *Spanish War*. Victorious Caesar returns from Gades to Hispalis and delivers a speech to the people, marking the end of the book with a rebuke of ungratefulness: 'Did you not realize that, even if I were destroyed, the Roman people has legions which could not only stop you, but could even bring the skies tumbling down about you?'(42) This theatrically emotional outburst reaches beyond its target audience and, underscoring Caesar's exceptional (quasi-divine) power, becomes an ominous end of the Caesarean literary corpus. Caesar's spirit would remain victorious even in death; the legions, inspired by their leader, not unlike Lucan's fanatical Caesarean soldiers, are ready to claim divine prerogatives and dispense universal justice.

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<sup>154</sup> Caesar writing letters (Plutarch 17), Caesar first using letters in codex form (Suetonius 56); Caesar denounces lingering death (Suetonius 87; Appian 2.110; Plutarch 63).

<sup>155</sup> Caesarean speeches by Dio (38.36-46; 41.26-35; 43.15-18).

In the continuators' accounts, Caesar demonstrates a characteristic pattern corresponding to the contrast between the long but inefficient speeches of the enemies and his efficient brevity, established in the *Commentaries*. Thus, a longer speech of the interlocutor (regardless of his provenance) could be checked by Caesar with a single sentence, uncompromisingly resolving the issue. For instance, in a scene in the *Spanish War*, when an envoy makes a speech asking for mercy, Caesar replies with a single sentence: 'As I have behaved to foreign peoples, so I shall behave to citizens who surrender' (17).

Clearly, Caesar's utterances scattered among the two biographies of Suetonius and Plutarch could not reflect the exact manner of his speech. However, this cannot negate the emotional effect of Caesar's remarks, which are sufficient enough to depict him credibly as efficient in his speech as in action. The quotable Caesar can be sententious and witty: on his way to Spain to serve as *propraetor*, Caesar passes by a Gallic village; his companions jokingly wonder whether its inhabitants have political competition like that in Rome; Caesar says that he would rather be the first man among these people, than the second man in Rome. After Pompey retreats to Greece, Caesar marches towards Spain, claiming that he is going to confront an army without a general, and should return to confront a general without an army.<sup>156</sup> Caesar's epigrammatic words are the punch line as it were, influencing the audience's attitude towards each episode and establishing Caesar as the one who determines the meaning of each event. Moreover, this sentential wisdom acquires a universal meaning, which the recipient of the text could apply to other situations, thus granting Caesar's words a more popular reception.

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<sup>156</sup> Exclamation in Gaul: Plutarch (11); remark on the general without an army: Suetonius (34).

Through ancient historiography, Caesar acquires important versatility of speech – the brief remarks enhance his efficiency and theatricality; the lengthier speeches enrich his reception as rhetorician, demagogue or military leader. Therefore, historiography's take on Caesarean manner of speaking is highly relevant to the process of his evolution from historical personality to dramatic character. Moreover, Caesarean quotes reach into the popular mind and enable the audience to re-evaluate the character seen on stage.

### **Losing authority?**

In the *Commentaries*, epic Caesar attains a quasi-divine position overlapping with his authorial omnipresence and creating a sense of dramatic irony. Since in all public appearances, especially during his first consulship, Caesar manifestly takes the people's side, in the light of my dramaturgical analysis, this can be interpreted as consciously taking the *audience's* side. Thus Caesar, through his contact with the people and his position among the *popolari*, is once again able to exercise a form of dramatic irony. In this sense, both leader and followers collude in their opposition to the Senate. The ancient historians are also privy to this plot and, although perhaps they tend to devalue the role of the 'people' as political factor, they acknowledge Caesar's strong relationship with his audience. However, Caesar remains a character and so the dramatic irony in ancient historiography belongs to each known or unknown author who inevitably restricts Caesar's perspective; consequently, Caesar is not always the protagonist, can lose control over situations, and, especially in the cases of the *Spanish war* and to some extent the *Alexandrian war*, may not even be present for the whole duration of the narrative.

In the *African War*, when Scipio brings out his army to challenge Caesar, the latter orders the soldiers to gather behind the fortifications in orderly fashion. This would have been the typical performance of fearlessness, save for one detail – Caesar gives the order from his tent (31).<sup>157</sup> At the decisive battle at Thapsus (82-3), we see a scene of an onslaught, in which Caesar attempts to restrain his men, but their aggression is uncontrollable; finally, the general gives the password ‘good luck’ and rushes towards the enemy lines on horseback. Success is difficult and Caesar struggles to steer its righteous course of mercy and restraint. A similar instance in the *Civil War* – the defeat at Dyrrachium – depicts the troops fleeing in panic, completely disregarding Caesar’s presence (3.69); in Appian’s account of the event, Caesar is even physically attacked when he attempts to halt a fleeing soldier (2.62). Nevertheless, Caesar the author allows this flaw in his authority to enhance the feeling of peril later contrasted by the victory at Pharsalus. The African episode, however, creates an image of the unstoppable army, its determination stronger than their commander’s scruples.<sup>158</sup> The *Alexandrian War* also offers instances of situations getting out of hand. Capturing the island of Pharos is difficult and a result of many skirmishes, both on land and sea. In one scene, a crowd of soldiers disembark on the causeway connecting the island with the mainland. Performativity of war is noted as some soldiers gather to watch the battle (20). However, engaged in another area, Caesar’s gaze lacks its sharp focus and the situation becomes uncontrollable. The general himself is soon forced to abandon his ship and swim to

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<sup>157</sup> According to Plutarch, he suffered an epileptic fit early in the battle and did not lead his troops in person (Plutarch 53). The decisive battle at Thapsus might have also been a proof of Caesar’s talent to control his troops without being visible to them, a claim supported by Goldsworthy (1998:208-9).

<sup>158</sup> These instances support Goldsworthy’s point that since the continuators present the image of a weaker Caesar, it could be assumed that Caesar omitted similar incidents in his writings (1998: 211).

safety. Later, he is once again struggling to restrain his people's merciless zeal for fighting (22).

Even the general's most stable 'epic' quality – speed – is challenged by various causes of delay, a 'device' notably employed by Lucan in his *Civil War*. Old enemies like Labienus, are capable of effectively delaying Caesar: after taking the town of Zeta (*African War*, 68), on the way back passing the enemy camp, Caesar is subjected to a cavalry attack by Labienus, so fierce that Caesar only manages to advance hundred yards in four hours. Such temporal details, although acting as an affirmation of Caesarean strength, could potentially undermine his speed and are avoided in the *Commentaries*.

Moreover, another episode of greater magnitude seriously undermines Caesarean determination and celerity, and puts into question the very foundation of his personal propaganda in the *Civil War*, namely his cumulative image as personification of reason and austerity. In 47 BC, following his victory in Egypt and before the campaign against Pharnaces, Caesar spent six months in Alexandria in what seems to have been an enjoyable sojourn with queen Cleopatra, who owed the security of her royal power to the Roman general. Caesar's Alexandrian escapade even included a cruise on the Nile – seemingly romantic, but more likely a state visit adorned with military presence.<sup>159</sup> Lacking the tragic potential of the Antony-Cleopatra relationship, the Caesar-Cleopatra affair entails an equally decadent, albeit more impassive game of power. More importantly, by staying almost six months in Egypt Caesar *delays* the civil war instead of bringing it to end by attacking the African positions before the Pompeians could regroup. Caesar's relationship with Cleopatra evokes parallels with classical epic examples in

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<sup>159</sup> There are only two references to the river journey: Suetonius (52) states that Caesar would have gone all the way to Aethiopia in Cleopatra's luxurious barge had not the army refused to follow; Appian (2.90) claims the fleet consisted of 400 ships; the escapade is discussed in the article by Hillard (2002).

which mythical (or mythologized) women delay epic heroes (Circe and Odysseus, Dido and Aeneas): his will is weakened by sensuality; he voluntarily falls into timelessness, and becomes subjected to emotions. However, whereas Antony would prove incapable of forsaking the devious charms of the queen, Caesar would abide to the epic ideal and, similarly to Odysseus and Aeneas, would pursue his higher purpose.<sup>160</sup>

Caesar's affair does not only produce an offspring, Caesarion, but also a special connection between the leading man in Rome and the east which even gives rise to rumours of Caesar planning to move the capital to Alexandria.<sup>161</sup> In the *Commentaries*, the general's speed and efficiency overwhelm the enemy (slower and more disorganized, 'barbarian' in his highly performative, *hybristic* irrational conduct) and enable him to obtain a supreme position to control the action from above, as it were. Although the continuators generally demonstrate fidelity to this particular Caesarean characteristic, the relationship with Cleopatra becomes a strong prerequisite of the eventual distortion of the polarity Caesar sets up between himself and the 'foreign' enemy.

Notwithstanding the elements of delay and undermined omnipresence and authority, Caesarean control of temporality prevails. Ancient historiography channels Caesarean relationship with time into two distinct directions: the introduction of the Julian calendar, an alteration of time reckoning affecting the whole (Roman) world; legendary genealogy, including divine ancestry and connection with Alexander the Great,

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<sup>160</sup> Description of Cleopatra's first meeting with Caesar and the effect she has on him – Dio (42.35), Florus (2.13.56); the story of her famous appearance wrapped in a carpet – Plutarch (49). Kahn (2000:453) defines Caesar as an epic character, combination of Odysseus (explorer and challenger of nature) and Aeneas (in his capacity of a founder of Rome).

<sup>161</sup> On the moving of the capital to Alexandria or, indeed Troy: Suetonius (79), Nicolaus of Damascus (20). For a discussion on Cleopatra's reputation and relationship with Rome, see Kleiner (2005), Southern (2007). Caesar placed a golden statue of Cleopatra in the temple of Venus Genetrix in his new forum. Appian claims it was in the temple even in his day (second century AD) (Appian 2.102).



which enhances Caesar's personal heroic aura and distorts the boundary between mythology, history and the present.

### **Securing control of time**

The successful calendar reform, namely the introduction of the so-called Julian calendar, was in fact a much needed modification. The Roman twelve-month lunar calendar had a total of 355 days with the addition of intercalary month (roughly between February and March) every two years.<sup>162</sup> In the years before 100 BC the calendar appears to have been in order; however, between 65 BC and 45 BC, only five intercalary months were inserted, causing a complete disorganization of the system. The arbitrariness of intercalary insertions signified a pronounced political manipulation of the calendar in the hands of the priests responsible for keeping it in order. In fact, given Caesar's efficiency, Mitchels (1967) makes a good point by suggesting that the eradication of such bureaucratic nuisance could have been the real motive for Caesar's reform of the calendar, rather than just a 'zeal for scientific accuracy'.<sup>163</sup> Lucan describes Caesar who, hungry for knowledge, in the midst of the war finds time to converse about astronomy in the Alexandrian court (*Civil War*, 10.172-331). Ancient historians accept the image of the scholar-general: during his stay in Alexandria Caesar familiarized himself with the

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<sup>162</sup> The reform is described by Censorinus (20.8-11); see also Hannah (2005). Yavetz (1983:114) claims that Caesar reformed the calendar in his capacity of dictator since he had the right to issue *edicta*; Ogilvie (1969) holds that the reform was introduced by Caesar as *pontifex maximus*.

<sup>163</sup> Mitchels (1967:170). Hannah (2005:110-1) notes the Republican magistrates' negative attitude towards insertion of intercalary months which would prolong their service. It should be noted that from 63 BC until his death in 44 BC the head of the *pontifices* was no other than Caesar himself. However, from 58 BC until the end of the African campaign in 46 BC, the year of the calendar reform, he was hardly capable of performing his duties as chief priest and, although probably aware of the manipulation of the calendar, there is no evidence that he instigated it.

Egyptian solar calendar; later he brought the Egyptian astronomer Sosigenes to Rome and collaborated with him for the introduction of the new calendar.<sup>164</sup>

To the modern mind, Caesar's calendar reform may appear as the act of supreme arbitrariness by the self-proclaimed master of time. Ancient historians, however, do not show much concern with the calendar issues and thus it becomes difficult to assess Caesar's motivation beyond practicality and, in more abstract terms, as a way to express his relationship with temporality.<sup>165</sup> However, the introduction of the 'new time' could be seen as an extension of Caesar's growing absolute power – a good example is the alleged reaction of Cicero, who, hearing that the Lyra would rise in the morning, replied: 'Yes, in accordance with the edict' (Plutarch 59). The aims behind the reform were hardly the enactment of a plan to subject people's lives to a demonic mastermind. Consequently there is a curious contrast between the plain necessity of the reform, reflected in the often pragmatic attitude of ancient historians, and its gigantic impact on European civilization. Despite its subsequent readjustment by Pope Gregory XIII in 1582, the Julian calendar still conditions the everyday of the Western world; the awareness of it is not restricted to those with knowledge in history or classical literature. Thus the impact of the reform proves integral to the broad cultural reception of Caesar's life and its importance for his epic and dramatic representations cannot be overestimated.<sup>166</sup>

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<sup>164</sup> On Caesar's work with Egyptian astronomers in Alexandria – Appian, 2.21, Dio, 43.26; for a discussion of *De Astris* ('On the Constellations'), work, possibly co-authored by Caesar, see Fantham (2009: 154).

<sup>165</sup> On relativity of ancient calendars and their synchronization, see Feeney (2007); on other calendar reforms, see Hannah (2005); an example of re-setting time to a new rule: after Caesar's victory at Pharsalus, Antioch institutes a new historical era, measuring time from the date of the fateful battle (Canfora 2007: 221). Re-setting time by a new ruler 'has been regarded as a regeneration of the history of the people or even of universal history' (Eliade 1985: 80).

<sup>166</sup> The reform 'crystalizes his remarkable ability to go far beyond the fame competition of his contemporaries to perceive the context in which his achievements might have the largest meaning and sway' (Braudy 1986: 88). Opposing view is held by Will (2008: 129) – together with the Romanization of central Europe, the reform is one of Caesar's incomplete political projects.

However, the aspiration to cosmic power implied by Cicero's remark creeps in with Caesar's introduction of other events to the calendar: following his unique quadruple triumph in September 46 BC, Caesar presented *Ludi victoriae Caesaris*; the games were subsequently moved to the month of his birth – July – and so ten days of Caesarean entertainment became imprinted on the calendar as another sign for Caesar's new temporality. It is difficult to determine whether the renaming of the month Quintilis to Iulius was part of the honours granted to Caesar during his lifetime, but the games held in that month of 44 BC were marked as July.<sup>167</sup> In order to 'launch' his new system and to make 45 BC consisting of 365 days, Caesar also added two months between November and December in addition to the intercalary month following February. So, 46 BC became a unit of 445 days and the fact that the year of Caesar's triumphs in Rome was the longest year ever is a superb metaphor for Caesarean mastery of time and enduring power.

Although in his *Commentaries*, Caesar allows speed and expediency to elevate him on the epic plane defined by control of temporality, he does not explicitly elaborate on his quasi-divine image. However, in ancient historiography this epic image acquires a more explicit manifestation as a mythological 'halo': the evocation of the past and the resulting conflation of the notions of past, present and future into one timeless 'now' is directly related to Caesar's personal propaganda relating to his legendary lineage. Although self-mythologizing was common among the Roman aristocracy, Caesar

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<sup>167</sup> Sumi (2005:147) notes that the games were advertised as taking place in the month of *July*; Yavetz (1969:75) accepts the change as a result of successful post-Ides negotiations between Octavian and Antony; Dio claims that Quintilis was renamed July before Caesar's assassination (44.5.2). The *Ludi Victoriae Caesaris* were not a precedent – Caesar's ideological adversary Sulla was the first to introduce his victory games in 81 BC.

overcame his competitors by combining various threads of mythology and successfully utilizing its performative aspects.<sup>168</sup>

A notable event in Caesar's early career was his funeral eulogy for Caesar's aunt Julia, the wife of Gaius Marius. In his speech, delivered during his quaestorship in 69 BC, Caesar exalted his family as heirs of gods (Venus) and kings (Ancus Marcius). This was also the first time after the fall of Marius and the bloody dictatorship of his ex-lieutenant Sulla that the images (or the *imagines*) of the general were put on display. When Caesar glorified his aunt and her divine descent, he was undoubtedly 'indulging a form of family pride shared by many aristocrats in the late Republic'.<sup>169</sup> However, given the scarcity of eulogies for women, this should be seen as both an act of respect and skilful creation of new occasions for self-presentation. We must also note the deliberateness of the timing of the event – as it has been pointed out, Caesar needed a spectacular appearance before his departure to Further Spain in order to be remembered until his return to the Roman political stage.<sup>170</sup> This demonstrates the ability of Caesar to use every opportunity to bring in the public eye the prominence of his connection to a popular leader (Marius) and to advertise his own personality.

Along with the customary festivals and public entertainment, in his capacity of *aedile*, Caesar gave spectacular funeral games, displaying an unprecedented number of gladiators (320 pairs), in honour of his father (praetor in 92 BC), who had died twenty years before. Caesar's aedileship featured another Marius-related display – the restoration

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<sup>168</sup> On the genealogies of Roman families and the ancients' awareness of the problem of false genealogies see Wiseman (1987).

<sup>169</sup> Wiseman (1987:207). The eulogy of Julia (Suetonius 6; Plutarch 5; Velleius Paterculus 2.43); Sumi (2005:45) regards Caesar's association of his *gens* with Aeneas as a bold move from a quaestor and young senator, albeit not unusual.

<sup>170</sup> Kahn (2000: 104).

of the images and trophies of Marius on the Capitol. This is a much more serious claim than the underpinning of his personal relationship with the hero – it demonstrates an ability to shape the topography of Rome by adding visual, permanent signs for the connection.<sup>171</sup> It is also the beginning of a policy of a performative evocation of the past in order to challenge the temporality boundaries of mythology, past and present. The combined divine/king ancestry transcends the eulogy of Aunt Julia and, by channelling through Marius and Caesar's father, reaches Caesar himself, a re-incarnation of the mythical and popular ancestors.<sup>172</sup>

Moreover, Caesar's divine ancestry goes back to the legendary Trojan founders of Rome – Aeneas and Romulus. As Aeneas' mother, Venus is Caesar's devoted companion more dedicated to him than to her other famous worshipper Pompey. Her name becomes the password in critical situations and brings victory; before the battle of Pharsalus Caesar vowed to build her a temple and later fulfilled his vow – the temple dominated his new forum and its inauguration in 46 BC formed an important part of the victory celebrations.<sup>173</sup> Caesar established a relationship with Romulus, demonstrating his ability to manipulate ideological connections in the mind of the public: the news of his victory at Munda, effectively bringing the Civil War to end in the west in 45 BC reached Rome on

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<sup>171</sup> The importance of the visual markers in the city (e.g. temples, statues) as evocation of the past is discussed in Sumi (2005); see also Hölscher (2006); Catullus voices the senate's opposition remarking that by displaying the images of Marius, Caesar is no longer using mines to subvert the state, but siege engines instead (Plutarch, 6); on the gladiatorial games and Marius' trophies: Plutarch (5-6), Suetonius (10-11); Dio (37.8) (mentions only gladiatorial contest).

<sup>172</sup> On the ancient ideas of mythological and historical time, see Feeney (2007), Hannah (2005). The fact that during the period of almost unlimited power, Caesar makes sure that a certain Amatius, presenting himself as the grandson of Marius, is exiled from Rome attests to his enduring ambition to be accepted as the true heir of Marius. Amatius returned to Rome after the assassination of Caesar and erected a column at Caesar's cremation place; as his popularity rose, Antony ordered his execution (Appian (3.2-3), Sumi (2005:112-5)); on Amatius as popular leader, see Yavetz (1969:58-63; 70-71).

<sup>173</sup> The name of Venus as password: Dio (43.43), Appian (2.76); on passwords in the last years of the Republic, see Clark (2007:205-9). In addition to the dedication of a temple to Venus, the newly established college of priests of Venus Genetrix, instead of the usual magistrates, presided over Caesar's victory games (discussed in Sumi (2005:61)).

the very day of the Parilia festival, the celebration of the founding of Rome. One of the honours granted to Caesar before his assassination was to be called father of the country, evoking an association with Romulus; according to Cassius Dio, Caesar was granted the right to offer *spolia opima* in the temple of Jupiter Feretrius and his statue was placed in the temple of Quirinus with an inscription ‘to the invincible god’ (Dio 44.4).<sup>174</sup>

Caesar is also connected to the specifically Roman concept of divine qualities. He characteristically does not refer to his *felicitas* in his works and claims personal *fortuna* only once; however, since these qualities were considered essential for the capable general, the authors of the *African* and *Spanish War* do not mention *felicitas* but recognize that quality in Caesar, ‘which they clearly intend the reader to infer’.<sup>175</sup> Uniting divine descent with proverbial good luck creates an intricate ideological bond with high referential value. Consequently, ancient sources mention that various temples of Fortuna, *Felicitas* and *Clementia* were connected to Caesar.<sup>176</sup>

An interesting aspect of Caesar’s self-mythologizing is the association with another quasi-divine figure – Alexander the Great. Although Caesar himself never refers to any possible connection with Alexander, Suetonius and Plutarch offer two versions of the same story: Caesar, in his early thirties, is distraught by the fact that he has not yet achieved anything great, whereas at the same age, Alexander had already conquered the

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<sup>174</sup> This account is not supported by the other historians. On the *spolia opima* see Versnel (1970), Beard (2007: 293); traditionally, the spoils of honour were given to a general, who had defeated the enemy commander in single combat. On the Roman appropriation of the Trojan origins and different versions of the relation between Aeneas and Romulus, see Gruen (1993: 31); on the playwrights Ennius and Naevius eliminating the temporal distance between Romulus and Aeneas (i.e. Romulus becoming the grandson of Aeneas) see Boyle (2006: 38).

<sup>175</sup> Murphy (1986: 316). Murphy (1986) discusses Caesar’s reference to *fortuna* in *Gallic War* (1.40) and the divine qualities in Caesar’s continuators. In his ‘Caesarean’ speeches, Cicero presents Fortuna as subjected to Caesar, and not merely helping him as in Pompey’s case (Clark (2007:247)); on the qualities of the general – Cicero, *De Imperio Gnaei Pompei*.

<sup>176</sup> Good examples of the exclusive association of the above qualities with Caesar are some Julian colonies, the names of which may have included special qualities. On the names of colonies and the data regarding the temples, subject to various interpretations, see Clark (2007:251-2).

world.<sup>177</sup> An important epic aspect of the Alexander myth is the quest for the unknown, the extremities of the world. This has led some commentators to see Caesar's expedition to Britain as a deliberate emulation of Alexander, with the crossing of the Rhine also evoking a reference to Alexander crossing the Danube.<sup>178</sup> Plutarch paired Alexander and Caesar in his parallel lives; Velleius Paterculus describes Caesar as resembling Alexander, but only when the latter was free from the influence of the wine and could control his passions. After describing Caesar's death, Appian draws a comparison between them: both are skilled at 'celeritas bellandi', enjoy great luck/fortune and both die in the midst of planning new campaign, a crucial element of Caesar's image to be considered below.<sup>179</sup>

Nevertheless, Caesar cannot escape the great, destructive ambition uniting him with Alexander. Lucan's harangue against Alexander demonstrates his contempt for the 'crazy offspring of Pellaeon Philip', but also serves as a mirror to Caesarean power; Caesar's interest in reaching the sources of the Nile – a quest, attempted by Alexander – invites a comparison between the two conquerors of the world. Thus Caesar and Alexander merge into collective image of an inhuman force which corrupts the successful general and transforms him into an irrational menace.<sup>180</sup>

Finally, two examples illustrate Caesar's possession of certain archetypal attributes of the heroic lore. Caesar rides a wondrous horse (with hoofs shaped like

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<sup>177</sup> The two versions: Caesar sees a statue of Alexander in a temple of Hercules in Gades (Suetonius, 7, Dio, 37.52); he reads a book on Alexander's exploits (Plutarch 11); according to Bell (2004: 47), there is no evidence that Caesar had more than contemplation of his image as a model of supreme fame and glory. Spencer (2002: 198) claims that it is the skilful subtlety of Caesar in the creation of his image that prevents him from making a direct analogy between himself and Alexander.

<sup>178</sup> DeWitt (1942) sees no logic behind Caesar's invasion of Britain unless we accept that he was consciously modelling his career on Alexander's.

<sup>179</sup> Velleius Paterculus (2.41), Appian (2.21.149-154); unfortunately, Plutarch's parallel has been lost.

<sup>180</sup> Lucan's *Civil War*: Alexander attempted to find the source of the Nile, so does Caesar (10.272-4), Lucan's opinion of Alexander (10.20-52).

human feet) which would not carry anyone else. In the superstition-free reality of Caesar, this horse appears as fantastical as a creature inhabiting the Hercynian forest in the realistic narrative of the *Gallic War* (6.24-8). Another story reveals the historians' awareness of Caesar's conscious myth-making: a sword, allegedly taken from Caesar at the battle of Gergovia, had been displayed in a temple by the Gallic tribe Aruveni. Although Caesar's associates advise him to order its removal, clearly deciding not to dispel the myth, Caesar smiles and allows the sword to remain as a relic.<sup>181</sup>

In his blend of narrative and meta-narrative of the *Commentaries*, Caesar's physical presence distorts the notion of historical narrative by having history happening 'now' and creating historical characters out of real people. In ancient historiography Caesar combines historical and mythical past with his performative present. By associating himself explicitly with Venus, Aeneas, and implicitly with Romulus/Quirinus, Caesar demonstrates that Rome owes its existence to his *gens* and thus claims the authority to shape its reality. The association with the positive aspects of Alexander adds a Hellenistic flair to his image and references to archetypal heroic lore profoundly mythologize his persona even further. Through the calendar reform and strong self-mythologization, aiming to fuse the notions of past-present-future into the embodiment of his person, Caesar establishes control of time on a large social and ideological scale.

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<sup>181</sup> On the symbolism of horses, see Miller (2000: 74-76); the horse is noted by Suetonius (61), who claims that Caesar ordered its statue to be placed in his forum; see also Dio (37.54); the episode with the sword is in Plutarch 26.



## Caesar performing the statesman

*ANTONY: Das heisst, das „Caesar ist, was Caesar spielte“?*

*CAESAR: Ein Diktator. Ich sehe, du hast mich verstanden.*

(Walter Jens, *Die Verschwörung* )

Caesar's ambiguous character has been recognized by scholarship ancient and modern. Regardless of whether personality, political action or military tactics are concerned, Caesar emerges as an enigmatic man, whose intelligence and benevolence often seems to be checked by arrogance and recklessness. The depiction of Caesar's physical condition generally reflects his heroic image: Suetonius claims that Caesar enjoyed good health, except for few epilepsy attacks towards the end of his life. His endurance, surprising to everyone, naturally enhances his heroic character and adds to the impression of efficiency and speed he created.<sup>182</sup> However, there is another Caesar who gradually succumbed to the 'eastern symptoms' of luxury and femininity;<sup>183</sup> in his early twenties, Caesar spent some time in Bythnia as an envoy to the king Nicomedes during

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<sup>182</sup> Caesar was an excellent rider and did not cover his head even in the rain (Suetonius 45, Plutarch 17); swimming abilities (*Alexandrian War* 21, Appian 2.90, Dio 42.40, Suetonius 44); he also cared for his friends: when his associate Oppius fell ill, he preferred to sleep outside while his friend was accommodated comfortably (Plutarch 17).

<sup>183</sup> Caesar built a villa and then ordered its demolition because of an aesthetic whim; in his expeditions, he carried marble slabs to cover the floor of his tent and used to buy works of art (and handsome slaves) regardless of their price; he offered a black pearl worth six million *sestercii* as gift to his lover Servilia (mother of Marcus Brutus) (Suetonius, 46, 47, 50). The love for luxury epitomised by Hellenistic and Middle Eastern influence was the staple accusation in Republican political propaganda.

his military service. Rumours about young Caesar's relationship with the king followed him all his life.<sup>184</sup>

The quest for the 'real' Caesar remains futile because it often marginalizes a fundamental aspect of human nature – performativity. However, it is important that the investigation of Caesarean performativity should not focus on seeking the historical validity of facts, but on acknowledging the ambiguity of the distinction between fact and fiction, conditioning the reception of Caesar from antiquity to present day.

Caesar's position as *pontifex maximus* serves as an illustration of how apparent inconsistency of character can be reconciled through performativity. Caesar was *pontifex maximus* – the head of the religious apparatus in the empire – from 63 BC until his death in 44 BC. He held a supreme religious post, while manifesting religious scepticism in historiography and bypassing the prominence of his position in his *Commentaries*. The rationalism of Caesar may have had a solid Epicurean foundation even though his political and military career appears as a clear deviation from the Epicurean principles of restraint and intellectual pursuits. However, as long as Caesar conducted his pontifical duties, he could easily perform the role of chief priest and yet remain sceptical, or indeed, Epicurean in his personal beliefs. Without devaluing the power of his priesthood, Caesar's ambiguous attitude towards the gods reveals the performativity not only of religious posts but the whole political life in the late Republic.<sup>185</sup>

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<sup>184</sup> Sulla had warned people to beware 'ill-girt' Caesar (Dio 43.43, Suetonius 45); Caesar's personal hygiene is noted by Suetonius (45). For discussion of Caesar's appearance see also Paterson (2009). Corbeill (2004:133-7) points out that Caesar adopted a specific behaviour, including the effeminate clothing, associated strongly with the *populari* politician; on mocking Roman politicians by effeminizing them, see also Parker (1996: 175-6); contemptuous remarks are listed by Suetonius (49, 52); by offering to swear an oath to deny his relationship with Nicomedes, Caesar 'incurred the further penalty of laughter' (Dio, 43.20).

<sup>185</sup> Caesar famously claimed that execution would not affect the conspirators, led by Catilina, as profoundly as if they were exiled and their property confiscated. Thus he implied that the soul is annihilated with

Although he demonstrated an acute awareness of the theatricality of the society he lived in, as a member of the senatorial class, Caesar was not directly involved in any dramatic activities. However, Caesar is described as engaged in literary-dramatic experiments typical for the aristocratic circles, bound to remain subject of private enjoyment and criticism. He composed a tragedy on Oedipus and a poem, called *Iter*.<sup>186</sup> Caesar's knowledge of Greek drama, expected from a well-educated Roman, is displayed at the crossing of the Rubicon when the general quotes a line from a play by Menander 'let the die be cast' (see above, n.86). Indeed, since theatricality in Roman society transcended the stage, we should seek the roots of dramatic Caesar in his public appearances.

The end of Caesar's spectacular project of the *Gallic War* was the beginning of the Civil War against his former ally Pompey. It caused a delay of the probably much-awaited Gallic triumph, but also added more victories to be celebrated in Caesar's characteristic grand scale. In the autumn of 46 BC, the general celebrated four unprecedented consecutive triumphs – Gallic, Egyptian, Pontic and African. A fifth, highly controversial triumph followed in 45 BC celebrating the victory in Spain against the last of the Pompeians, commanded by Gnaeus, the son of Pompey. Reflecting the supreme political position of Caesar, the triumphs surpass all his previous achievements

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death, an Epicurean notion (Sallust, *Catilinian War* 51.20); Scullard also notes the Epicurean influence in Caesar's speech (1981: 37)); Kahn (2000) sees the antagonism between Stoicism and Epicureanism as the very foundation of the struggle between Caesar and his enemies. Discussing Caesar's Epicurean connections, Bourne claims that '[T]he Epicurean disdain for the hypocrisies of traditional religion was only one aspect of an insistence on intellectual honesty' (Bourne 1977: 422); Caesar's affection for literary clarity is another such claim for honesty; however, I am not convinced that treating the *Commentaries* as an expression of a 'decision to state the facts and let them speak for themselves' (*ibid.*) allows for the depth of the meaning of the works, although appropriate for Caesar's adherence to Atticism.

<sup>186</sup> The poem was composed during Caesar's journey from Rome to Spain, probably in 45 BC (Suetonius 56); Augustus forbade the publication of *Oedipus* (*ibid.*); neither of the two works has been preserved; referring to Isidore (*Etymologies* 4.12.7), Corbeill (2004:137 n. 155) notes that the only fragment preserved from Caesar's poem mentions people anointing themselves with scent.

in the field of revelry management. Consciously exploring representational models of history and performance, Caesar was aware that the triumphs would be seen in the light of his written works and his appearance subject to endless interpretation.

The theatricality of the triumph has been acknowledged by both ancient and modern commentators.<sup>187</sup> Its enormous impact on the audience (and history) was constantly reinforced from within its ritualistic structure affirming the glory of the Roman Empire. Ritual and drama share an alternate temporality, a return to archetypal time and divine creation. In a suspension of time, the triumph distorts reality and obliterates the difference between representation and actuality.<sup>188</sup> The emotional impact on the audience is another powerful connection between drama and the triumph, the aim of which is to move the audience through ‘powerful emotion by presenting them with emphatic images of reality’.<sup>189</sup> The spectator experienced joy from the victory and confirmation of the supremacy of Rome. This high emotional charge was underlined by the contrast between the crying (or downcast in any case) captives, and the laughing crowd, celebrating both the real victories in distant lands and their own involvement in the triumph.

The participation of real captives, paraded together with spoils of war before the appearance of the victorious general, was loaded with immense performative potential: kings were displayed mounted on chariots, could be presented in chains or as part of

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<sup>187</sup> A definitive study on the origins of the triumphal celebration is Versnel (1970); see also Scullard (1981) and Beard (2007); Varro, the prominent scholar of the Late Republic, suggests that its origins are connected to the Dionysian procession (Beard 2007: 245-6); the spoils of Pompey’s Asian triumph were most likely used as props for the first performances in his theatre in 55 BC (on the performance, see Cicero *Letters to his Friends* 7.1).

<sup>188</sup> In ritual, there is an ‘abolition of time through the imitation of archetypes and the repetition of paradigmatic gestures’ (Eliade 1985:35); on timelessness of ritual and theatre, see also Turner (1982); on representation equalling reality – Beard (2007:185), who notes that the destroyed towns that are no more ‘exist’ in the triumphs as paintings or models.

<sup>189</sup> Östenberg (2009:265). Östenberg also finds links between Roman rhetoric and its devices (the notions of *illustratio*, *evidentia*, *sub oculos subiecto*), and the emotional impact of the triumph (2009:265).

tableaux, depicting the scene of their defeat. The appearance of foreign peoples in their native costumes caused humiliation, but also underlined their foreignness and evoked curiosity. Due to its highly mimetic nature the triumph became the true face of war in the social consciousnesses.<sup>190</sup>

Surprisingly, no detailed account of the Caesarean triumphs survives; the existing narratives are interconnected and it is occasionally problematic to distinguish to which triumph particular detail belongs. However, the scarcity of facts does not deprive Caesar of triumphal fame. The four triumphs took place probably towards the end of September 46 BC, each procession possibly lasting one day; the celebrations ended with the dedication of the temple of Venus Genetrix in Caesar's new forum. The customary representations and models of cities included an extraordinary model of the Pharos lighthouse with semblance of flames.<sup>191</sup> Velleius Paterculus (56) frames the theme of each triumph by noting the four materials used for the placards, a distinctive feature of a triumph: citrus wood (Gallic), acanthus (Pontic), tortoise-shell (Egyptian), ivory (African) and polished silver (Spanish). The Pontic triumph featured perhaps the most famous slogan in history – 'Veni. Vidi. Vici.' – referring to Caesar's victory over Pharnaces and a superb example of language matching physical expediency. The three words, quoted from a dispatch, sent by Caesar to his friend Amantius in Rome, are bold personal propaganda, replacing the traditional description of the events with

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<sup>190</sup> In 120 BC, Fabius Maximus presented the king of the Arverni, displayed as in battle, mounted on a chariot. Pompey's Asian triumph notably included representatives of the conquered nations in their national costumes. All instances are discussed in Östenberg (2009); on triumph as the face of war in social consciousness, see Brilliant (1996:221).

<sup>191</sup> On the Pharos model, see Florus (2.13, 88-9); these models undoubtedly generated much interest and admiration, although they could also provoke sarcasm: in the Spanish triumph, Caesar allowed his generals Q.Fabius Maximus and Q.Pedius to celebrate triumphs each for the same victory; when Maximus displayed wooden towers someone remarked that these were the cases for Caesar's ivory towers (Quintilian 6.3.61).

personal/subjective emotional expression.<sup>192</sup> Gold images of the rivers Rhine, the Rhone, and the Ocean showed how subjected nature is brought to the centre of civilized world and posed a challenge to Pompey's image as a world conqueror. Another sign of establishing a new world rule, the amount of gold paraded in the triumphs 'resulted in a situation where the gold coinage of Macedon, Carthage, Ptolemaic Egypt, and Gaul ceased to circulate'.<sup>193</sup>

#### **Four in a row**

Clearly, to organize all four processions required exceptional organizational skills and almost unfathomable resources. Moreover, by organizing four triumphs in a row, Caesar challenged the ideological core of the procession and fully exploited its theatrical potential. The apotheosis of a single successful campaign, the achievement of a lifetime, became series of performances of a single man. Some famous triumphs have been presented in the course of two, or even three days.<sup>194</sup> However, the prolonged duration clearly emphasized on the great amount of spoils and captives, and implicitly on the persona of the general. In Caesar's case, it is he who appeared four times, performing the role of victor in four different conflicts, each appearance evoking comparison with the others.

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<sup>192</sup> 'Veni, vidi, vici': Plutarch (50), Appian (2.91), Suetonius (37); on the placards (*tituli*), processional floats (*pegmata*) and the triumphal paintings, see Holliday (1997), who maintains that the paintings, shown in the procession, were later displayed in temples and public spaces.

<sup>193</sup> Östenberg (2009:78). The money displayed (Velleius Paterculus 56; Appian 2.102); on the triumphal rivalry between Caesar and Pompey, see Östenberg (2009); on the representation of rivers in Caesar's triumphs – Florus (2.13.88).

<sup>194</sup> Triumphs lasting more than one day: Pompey's triumph in 61 BC (two days) and Octavian's – against Cleopatra – in 29 BC (three days); on the temporal dimension of triumphs: Pompey's three triumphs spread over twenty years create the impression of a gradual conquest of the world, whereas Caesar's – all taking place in one month – underline his superior celerity (Östenberg 2009: 287).

The portrayal of the enemy in the triumphs was fundamentally affected by the highlighted histrionic structure of Caesar's celebrations and reflected the controversy of his newly established power. Although the African triumph was presented as victory against foreign foe – king Juba – he happened to be the main ally of the Pompeians; moreover, a year later, Caesar was in a position to present the Spanish triumph completely stripped of ideological disguise. Therefore, there are three distinct levels of presentation of the enemy and three characteristic 'Caesars' reflected in them: the true foreign enemy, defeated by the traditional Roman general; a foreign enemy (king Juba), used as a disguise for the defeated Pompeians in Africa, defeated by the victor of the Civil War, *acting* as a traditional Roman general; the son of Pompey, defeated by the new Caesar, the master of Rome.

Even those sincerely enjoying the spectacle were hardly as ignorant of Caesar's agenda to discard possible other versions of the story behind each triumph, especially since some audience members may have eye-witnessed the described events.<sup>195</sup> Therefore, the perception of the triumphs entailed a fine suspension of disbelief not unlike that of experiencing dramatic performance.<sup>196</sup> However, the diverse mimetic messages transmitted by each Caesarean triumph implied that each subsequent procession challenged the veracity of the previous representation of the enemy and victor. The audience was stirred by a kaleidoscope of appearances, each 'Caesar' infusing the

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<sup>195</sup> Florus' exclamation could reflect the popular opinion at the time: 'Pharsalia, Thapsus and Munda made no appearance; yet, how much greater were the victories for which he had no triumph!' (2.13, 89).

<sup>196</sup> Good example is Appian's scepticism regarding Pompey wearing the genuine cloak of Alexander the Great in his triumph; however, the historian offers an explanation that would make the acquisition plausible thus offering: 'a neat encapsulation of the ambivalence that 'belief' in triumphal spectacle entails' (discussed in Beard 2003: 35).

ritualistic performance of the reaffirmation of Roman nationalistic values with different and highly personalized agenda.

Caesar paraded Cleopatra's sister Arsinoe, only thirteen at the time, as the main enemy of the Alexandrian war; similarly to Juba's, her presence attested to the fact that Caesar fought against foreign enemies. However, the fact that people felt pity for her signifies that to some extent they saw her as innocent victim, thus implying that Caesar's image in the Egyptian triumph was also vulnerable to accusation of cruelty and unnecessary humiliation. Moreover, Caesar allowed some more scandalous inclusions, allegedly sparing only the display of Pompey's image: there was a depiction of the deaths of all leading Pompeians in Africa including Cato's suicide at Utica. Appian portrays the audience, who 'although restrained by fear, groaned over their domestic ills'; Cicero claims that people were angry at Caesar's display of Massilia, which had once been an allied city.<sup>197</sup> However, the same audience applauded the death of the Egyptians Achilles and Pothinus, and laughed at Pharnaces' flight. The Spanish triumph was a complete transgression of tradition, but by no means deprived of performative value. In fact, this last, almost painfully authoritarian celebration of Caesarean/Roman power can be seen as most appropriate to channel dramatic effects such as pity and fear. The tragedy of the losing party and the dire consequences of opposing Caesar's will once again elevated the general to quasi-divine heights and awkwardly confirmed his role as *deus ex machina*. The triumph proclaimed the new authority and the defeated enemy's fate was to serve as

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<sup>197</sup> People feeling pity for Arsinoe (Dio, 43.19); images of Cato (Appian, 2.101); display of Massilia (Cicero *Phillipics* 8.6.18). Although this was not a very common triumphal feat in the Late Republic, Caesar may have displayed siege machinery to show that Massilia had been captured by force (Östenberg 2009: 45).



an example for the audience, who, safely anonymous in the multitude, should curb any *hybristic* impulses against the man, personifying power.

The relationship between Caesar as a *popularius* politician and the people of Rome, conditioned by the notion of dramatic irony – taken metaphorically to signify Caesar’s collusion with his supporters – is challenged by the triumphal appearances. The visual depiction of Caesarean enemies, presented as Roman enemies, could generate or reinforce existing doubts regarding the righteousness of the Civil War; more importantly, the multifaceted Caesar of the triumphs emerges as a reflection of an apt and elusive performer.

### **The defeated Gaul – from page to stage**

By interweaving layers of dramatic and epic elements in his *Commentaries*, Caesar creates a complex literary-performative structure to present his own heroic self as master of temporal reality. However, it is the establishment of a sense of continuity from written work to physical actualization that validates Caesar’s agenda. As the only triumph for victory other than during the Civil War, the Gallic triumph celebrated the exploits of Caesar as the true, traditional Roman general. More importantly, it featured Vercingetorix – the great enemy of the *Gallic War* – in flesh and blood. The physical appearance of a character after years of virtual existence in a literary-historical narrative is a supreme sublimation of theatricality and reality. According to Edwards (2003), the famous statues of the dying Gauls are found in the Horti Sallustiani (once occupied by Caesar) thus suggesting they were commissioned for the Gallic triumph. So, after appearing in the

script, the Gauls materialized as a 'set' and, finally, they came to life: Vercingetorix, kept in prison in Rome for seven years, was brought on stage.<sup>198</sup> The spectators began to *experience* the history of Caesar and their participation in the procession as active recipients theatricalized their mundane reality. The alternative reality, projection of Caesar's literary and historical consciousness, was gradually established as the new world order. For the audience, however, the assertion of political power equalled a welcome entertainment – a cathartic revelry to heal the wounds of the civil war with the remedy of foreign conquest. The author of the *Gallic War* appeared in the epilogue of his own drama – a performative event to complete the already theatrical written/spoken history and to make victory happen in the streets of Rome.

There are different opinions of whether executions of the chief captives were customary part of the ritual; in fact a number of captives were 'adopted' into Roman society, thus revealing another function of the triumph – as initiation to *Romanitas*.<sup>199</sup> However, occasionally the procession halted at the foot of the Capitoline hill and the enemy was led away to the *carcer* to be killed. Such was the fate of Vercingetorix. Here is a performance with a twist – a return from triumphal play back towards crudeness of life as the enemy is killed because of his crimes committed against Rome. It is another layer of distortion, which threatens the unstable reality-play demarcation line of Caesarean histrionics. The realism of the execution is twofold – it deprives the triumph of its symbolism, bringing it down to earth, evoking its sacrificial ritualistic origins; however, it also infuses the theatrical event with a dose of realism with the capacity to

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<sup>198</sup> Edwards (2003:60); the surrender and imprisonment of Vercingetorix (Caesar, *Gallic War* 7.89; Dio, 40.41; 43.19.4; Plutarch 27).

<sup>199</sup> On the enemy becoming Roman, see Beard (2007: 140-1); in Pompey's triumph in 61 BC, all captives were allowed to return to their countries on the expense of the state.

render credibility to the *Gallic War* narrative. When viewed in the light of the existing literary/historical representation of the conflict, with the Gallic chief acting as a medium between history and representation, the appearance of Vercingetorix resembles the embodiment of history in *fabula praetexta* with its meta-theatrical complexity. Nevertheless, the notion of history on stage is challenged by the real execution of the antagonist and the participation of the protagonist himself.

### **Universal celebration**

The issue of the divine image of the triumphator is much debated; however, regardless of whether the general is seen as performing Jupiter, or as his temporary emanation, for the duration of the triumph, representation became the only reality. The general existed in a limbo, ‘caught as much between glory and absurdity, as between man and god’.<sup>200</sup> Although representation may have been the only reality, it allowed for self-consciousness of performance; therefore, Caesar’s appearance should be considered as a realization of his performative potential. Ancient historians are generally more attentive to the spoils and displays of the triumphs than to Caesar’s behaviour. An exception is made by Cassius Dio, who offers an interesting episode from the Gallic triumph, in which Caesar turned an accident into performance: the axle of his chariot broke and so Caesar ascended the temple of Capitoline Jupiter on his knees, an impressive act of piety and

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<sup>200</sup> Beard (2003:29). Payne (1962: 62-64) does not see the *triumphator* as god, but rather a human who interacts with Jupiter; Scullard (1981:213-4) traces the possible identification with the gods as part of the Romans’ Etruscan heritage of anthropomorphized deities; for detailed analysis, see Versnel (1970).

endurance.<sup>201</sup> However, since the triumph allowed for abundant symbolism, the breaking of the chariot could have been treated as a warning sent by the gods to humble a self-proclaimed god. Although it is dubious whether notoriously superstition-free Caesar would accept a divine message, it is likely that he allowed the incident to bring him closer to his audience who could more easily identify themselves with Caesar the (mortal and prone to accidents) man.<sup>202</sup>

Multiple avatars of the victorious general, Caesar's five triumphal appearances stirred the emotions of the audience; pity, fear and catharsis created a whirlwind, in which representation became reality and vice versa, and Rome was immersed in one man's world.

Following the triumphs, at the feast and dedication of the temple of Venus, Caesar entered his new forum exquisitely dressed and garlanded with flowers; he played the host of a party with the Roman plebs as his guests. Later, he proceeded across the Roman forum towards his official residence as *pontifex maximus*, accompanied by large retinue.<sup>203</sup> Caesar entertained people across the whole city with lavish meals and the display of animals. He also organized performances in different languages – an extraordinary initiative, transforming Rome into a 'theatre Babel' and demonstrating the

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<sup>201</sup> Dio (43.21); this incident prompts the unusual claim that Caesar recited a charm every time he mounted a chariot (Pliny 28.21); although suggesting rather haphazardly that epileptic fit might have forced Caesar to crawl the steps, Payne (1962:130) nevertheless acknowledges the powerful impact of the event.

<sup>202</sup> To affirm the humanness of the triumph protagonist, traditionally, the soldiers, following the general's chariot sang ribald songs. In Caesar's case, the general's sexual conquests together with his relationship with Nicomedes were the subject of the mockery (Suetonius 49; 51; also Dio 43.20). Beare (1955:31) notes that the soldiers used the metre of *trochaic septenarius*, i.e. words spoken to musical accompaniment, used in drama.

<sup>203</sup> The 'private' party is discussed by Sumi (2005: 62); theatrical performances (Suetonius 39); Suetonius (37) claims that elephants with torches flanked Caesar's ascent to the capitol for his Gallic triumph; however, the version of Cassius Dio (43.22) sounds more plausible: elephants with torches escorted Caesar home after the festivities in the last day of the triumphs. Östenberg (2009:183) notes that Caesar might have been influenced by Eastern royal practices as Antiochus VI also employed torch-bearing elephants; see also the chapter on elephants in Bell (2004).

popular appeal of dramatic performance. The post-triumphal celebration is an example of complete blending of the notions of public and private and transgression of the borders of ritual, performance and daily life. The active participation of the audience in the show, with Caesar presiding over the transformation of the city of Rome into a living theatrical set, intoxicated them with the drug of national pride and feeling of supremacy they shared with the leader.<sup>204</sup> In addition to eliminating spatial and public-private boundaries, Caesar's triumphal celebrations essentially challenged temporality. Four triumphs in a row and the ensuing festivities created a clear sense of temporal extension of the glory of military success. The relationship with the past found an expression in the revival of the *lusus troiae* – young men of noble rank performing complicated manoeuvres on horseback, a tradition traced back to Aeneas' son Iulus. In addition to the infantry battle in Circus Maximus – 500 people and twenty elephants – Caesar organized the first *naumachia*; in this naval battle of Egyptians versus Tyrians, history was recreated in the form of historical fiction.<sup>205</sup> Notably, as part of the excessive honours voted by the Senate, Caesar was allowed to wear his triumphal *costume*, together with a golden crown, on public occasions including sacrifices conducted by him; his lictors could carry fasces adorned with fresh laurel, another sign for triumph.<sup>206</sup> Thus, Caesar's character became fixed in a lifetime of triumph, once again challenging the notions of reality and representation. However, on his quasi-divine pedestal, he was yet to face his perhaps

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<sup>204</sup> With his numerous building projects, including the moving of the rostra away from the curia to set a direct line between the speaking platform and the *regia* (his headquarters as *pontifex maximus*) Caesar creates his 'set'; on Caesar altering the topography of Rome, see Sumi (2005:50-1;72). Hölscher (2006: 42) discusses the transmission of victory in Rome (via triumphs) and its transformation in visual monuments; he maintains that Caesar understood well that the message of military victories should remain *potential* – to reflect power, not a specific victory.

<sup>205</sup> As a contrast, Augustus presented a *naumachia* re-enacting a historical conflict – the battle at Salamis; Augustus' more definite relationship with the past is noted by Sumi (2005:268).

<sup>206</sup> Appian (2.106), Dio (44.4-7).

most spectacular performance: death ended Caesar's corporeal existence and elevated his self-dramatized persona to a new transcendental life as a cultural myth.

## **The tragedy of *clementia***

### **The politics of mercy**

The Roman people, owing their lives to Caesar, become characters and audience of the *Civil War*; as a result, Caesar's *clementia* functions as a bridge between written works and reality. Although the image of benevolence was fundamental for Caesar's career, he did not deny righteous punishment of deserters and enemies. Ancient historiography avoids exposing Caesar as cruel; moreover, presented in accordance with Caesar's accounts, the behaviour of the enemy in historiography is equally irrational, resulting in either highlighting Caesar's benevolence or justifying lack of mercy.

At the dawn of the civil conflict, Caesar's conduct is opposed to Pompey's – the latter declares that those who remain neutral in the conflict will be considered enemies, whereas Caesar announces that neutrality would secure his friendship. On the field of Pharsalus, he urges his soldiers to avoid unnecessary bloodshed and allows every man in his army to save an enemy. Caesar treats deserters from the Pompeian army favourably, although those pardoned and yet persistent in their enmity are denied second chance (Suetonius 75).

Nevertheless, Caesar's absolute benevolence is sometimes subjected to suspicion, implying possible propaganda omissions in the *Commentaries* and a *performance of*

*mercy*. Caesar's *Civil War* does not account for a major revolt in his army, reaching its peak after the victory at Pharsalus and forcing Caesar to lead a limited number of troops to chase Pompey towards Egypt.<sup>207</sup> Historiography recreates the event as an emotional and theatrical scene. The victorious general returning from the Alexandrian and Pontic war, meets the mutinous legions in Campus Martius in order to organize them to carry on the war in Africa. He faces their violent discontent and instead of providing the payment they require, he discharges them, calling the soldiers 'citizens'. In this thrilling scene a single word – '*quirites*' – quells the mutiny; the ashamed soldiers would not allow others to triumph in their place and are once again ready to die for Caesar.<sup>208</sup> The gaze of the general is as strong as ever in its power to bring glory or shame – Caesar's disapproval can exclude these men from his reality. Dreading anonymity, the soldiers crave to continue performing their role and forget their financial needs.

Following the victory at Thapsus, Caesar imposes heavy taxes on everyone who collaborated with the Pompeians; however, he allows certain people to buy off their own property and thus at least secure their possessions. The people '...accepted this without demur and thanked him, declaring that this day marked the start of life for them' (*African War* 90). The beginning of new life – granting time – is the familiar expression of Caesar's *clementia* implied in his works. In a scene in the *Spanish War*, three envoys make a long speech pleading for Caesar's mercy, to which he replies characteristically with one sentence: 'As I have behaved to foreign peoples, so I shall behave to citizens who surrender' (17). Exemplifying Caesar's brevity, this line has been quoted above as

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<sup>207</sup> The rebellious legions, including Caesar's 'favourite' – the tenth – return to Italy and are left to Antony who struggles to remain in control; Chrissanthos (2001) treats the mutiny as a success for the soldiers who forced Caesar to make various concessions for them.

<sup>208</sup> Suetonius (70), Dio (42.52-3), Plutarch (51), Appian (2.92-4).

another expression of his *celeritas*; however, the dialogue also reveals another, more sinister Caesar whose mercy may be a strategic necessity detached from sympathy. Captured enemy messengers with their hands cut off appear earlier (12); Caesar's answer to the people of a besieged town attempting to negotiate with him is that he is the one to set the terms, not to accept them (13). As the narrative progresses we learn that more scouts are captured and killed (20). The death toll grows steadily with the victory at Munda and the murder of Gnaeus, the son of Magnus. Caesar's indignation at those who supported the Pompeian cause culminates at the end of the book: Caesar returns from Gades to Hispalis and delivers a direct speech, accusing the people of ungratefulness for all benefits he had bestowed on their province (42).

Hearing about the suicide of his enemy Cato, killing himself in Utica to avoid capture, Caesar famously exclaims that he must grudge Cato his death the way Cato has resented the possibility to have his life preserved by Caesar.<sup>209</sup> To *perform* mercifulness does not only concern the benefactor and the person whose life is spared – it is for the world to witness. Seen from a perspective different from Caesar's own, mercy emerges as a performative act regardless of it being an expression of a sincere humaneness or a clever strategy.<sup>210</sup>

Although Caesar seemed to have offered his enemies mercy with the sugar-coating of friendliness, this was a bitter medicine for the Pompeian illness.<sup>211</sup> The Ides of

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<sup>209</sup> Plutarch (54); also noted by Dio (43.12).

<sup>210</sup> Caesar's famous letter in which he announces his politics of mercy, preserved among Cicero's correspondence (*Letters to Atticus* 174C (9.7C)), as well Curio's remarks that Caesar was not naturally averse to bloodshed, but expects clemency to bring him popularity (Cicero *Letters to Atticus* 195(10.4)) have been noted in chapter 1.

<sup>211</sup> Many prominent Roman aristocrats were either less resolute or more cunning than Cato. After the Civil War, Caesar was in position to extend his benevolence to people like Gaius Cassius, Marcus Brutus and Cicero who received it with mixed feelings entirely in accordance with Roman views on mercy – it should be shown only towards foreigners. In fact, treating Romans as foreigners is essential for Caesar's



March supplied an apt proof of the enemy's irrationality, which Caesar aimed to expose in his works: the Pompeians, their lives spared by Caesar, true to their nature it seems and victims of their own anger, betrayed him, doomed themselves and sealed the fate of the Republic in an elaborate tragic coup de theatre.

## Virtual realities

So far, I have discussed some of Caesar's popular public appearances in relation to various aspects of his so-called 'epic-dramatic' image, established in the *Commentaries*. Drawing closer to Caesar's death, we encounter a series of controversially meaningful appearances of the general in the beginning of 44 BC. The celebrations of the *Feriae Latinae*, the *Lupercalia* and the numerous honours granted by the Senate blend into a medley in which the notions of divine kingship, deification, and tyranny mark senatorial submission and encourage Caesarean ambition. Consequently, Caesar's mercy is more easily perceived as the act of goodwill of a supreme ruler with kingly attire.<sup>212</sup>

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propaganda in the *Civil War*; Barton (2007:248-50) discusses the Roman attitude towards defeat: as the defeated were left in the general's *fides*, all power went to the victor – hence the defiance of the Romans to accept even what seem to be favourable conditions of surrender.

<sup>212</sup> Gradel (2002:54-5) identifies three main phases in Caesar receiving divine honours: (1) 46 BC (after the victory at Thapsus) – chariot and statue to be placed on the Capitol, bearing the title demigod; (2) 45 BC (after Munda) – statue in the temple of Quirinus with an inscription declaring him an unconquered god; (3) last months of his life – state divinity with a cult name (*Divus Iulius*), a state priest (flamen), temple, and a sacred couch (*pulvinar*) for his image; the honours are also discussed in Bernstein (2007); conjectures that a temple of *clementia* was dedicated (Appian 2.106, Plutarch 57, Dio 44.6); on depiction of the temple of *clementia* on coins, see Carson (1957).

In 45 BC, the Senate granted Caesar a ten-year dictatorship, which eventually became a post for life;<sup>213</sup> he became censor, was proclaimed Father of the Country, and at the beginning of 44 BC he was once again both consul and dictator. Caesar's alleged aspirations to royal power could have been influenced by the Hellenistic form of government and many Roman generals campaigning in the east, including Pompey, had experienced a 'touch' of divine kingship. Given the manifest connection between Caesar and Quirinus, it could also be related to re-establishing the Etruscan royal tradition. Caesar's final aims are subject to many academic debates and my treatment of these issues cannot claim to be exhaustive.<sup>214</sup> The point of this discussion is to set the issues relating to Caesar's honours in the context of the Senate's performance of honouring Caesar and his equally performative acceptance or decline of these. The importance of recognizing performativity offers a view, considering Caesar's actions as a coherent reaction to the Senate's opposition.

In his *Commentaries*, Caesar strives to impose the virtual reality of his subjective views onto the existing reality of Rome; by gaining absolute power, Caesar's literary character is also successfully implemented in history. The extraordinary triumphs and the building of the new forum demonstrate the scale of Caesar's power and its actualization through engaging the audience in histrionic display. The issues of kingship and deification signify a new level of Caesar's virtualization and the celebrations of the

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<sup>213</sup> Appian (2.106), Plutarch (57), Suetonius (76), Dio (43.14) (dictator for ten years), (44.8) (suspicions he was made dictator for life); Caesar had already challenged the traditional concept of dictatorship as exceptional position by holding it for six years in a row since the beginning of the civil war.

<sup>214</sup> For a summary of the debate regarding Caesar's kingship (Hellenistic or Etruscan), see Yavetz (1983); Caesar was assigned the insignia of Etruscan royalty – wreath of gold, creating an association with Romulus/Quirinus Rawson (1975:148); Caesar's wreath depicted on coins reminds of Etruscan headdress, but 'it remains uncertain [...] whether the ancient regalia of the kings of Rome did include a golden wreath' (Carson 1957:52); Versnel (1970: 397) claims that Caesar was treated as a king with divine honours, clearly influenced by Hellenism, but its germs are to be found in the sacral kingship evoked during triumphal procession.

*Feriae Latinae* and *Lupercalia*, held respectively in January and February 44 BC, are highly significant for its development.

Problems arose when someone placed a white fillet, symbol of kingship, on a statue of Caesar and two tribunes ordered its removal. Instead of commending them Caesar dismissed the tribunes from the Senate. Suetonius remarks that Caesar was aggravated because the tribunes deprived him of the chance to refuse kingship publicly. Another plausible claim, made by Nicolaus of Damascus, is that Caesar actually accused the tribunes of placing the diadems themselves as provocation.<sup>215</sup> Nevertheless, Caesar's reaction provoked disapproval. When coming into the city from the Alban mount after the *Feriae Latinae*, the dictator was saluted as Rex, to which he angrily replied that he is Caesar, not king.<sup>216</sup>

While Caesar was watching the customary race of the priests at the *Lupercalia*, the leading man of the procession and Caesar's consular colleague for 44 BC – Mark Antony – ran directly towards Caesar, mounted the rostra and offered him a diadem or, indeed, placed it directly on the dictator's head who took it off; when Antony persisted in giving the diadem, Caesar finally rose, exclaimed that the only one deserving it is Jupiter himself, and ordered the object to be placed on Jupiter's Capitoline statue. The people's reactions were mixed, but the applause for Caesar's refusal of the 'kingship' was far greater than that for Antony's act.<sup>217</sup> This ambiguous scene has generated much debate –

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<sup>215</sup> Suetonius (79), Nicolaus of Damascus (20), Plutarch (61); according to Nicolaus (22), the tribunes were allowed to return from exile and so they might have avoided the sinister fate of their namesakes in Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar* who, according to Casca, are 'put to silence' (*Julius Caesar*, I.2).

<sup>216</sup> Plutarch (60), Suetonius (79), Dio (44.9), Appian (2.108); the celebration of the *Feriae Latinae* included a procession to the Alban mount, sacrifice and banquet at temple of Jupiter Latiaris; Caesar was granted the honour to wear the red boots of Alban kings and to enter the city after the procession on horseback (Sumi 2005: 65).

<sup>217</sup> The Lupercalia scene (Suetonius 79, Dio, 44.9-11, Plutarch 61 Appian, 2.108-9); Caesar rejected the crown but 'in such a way that he did not seem to be displeased' (Velleius Paterculus 2.56). The account of

was it a charade staged by Caesar and his associates to test the public opinion or a subversive act to undermine his reputation? Was Antony aiming to show his loyalty by promoting Caesar to the top level of power?<sup>218</sup> According to Cassius Dio, Caesar was not irritated and ordered to be inscribed in the records that royalty was offered to him by the people through the consul, but he had refused. This treatment of the episode implies that Caesar deliberately constructed performative occasions in which to demonstrate publicly his denial of kingship. The *Lupercalia* is a highly mimetic episode: the half-naked Antony rushes onto the platform and places the diadem on Caesar's head, the latter's grand gesture of removing it and the repetition of the act, emphasizing Caesar's rejection of royalty – memorable physical action, stirred by the impetus of the ancient procession.

The wave of honours heaped on Caesar prompts some ancient historians to remark on the dubious goodwill of the Senate which introduced the most exceptional privileges in order to create general feeling of odium towards Caesar's power. Since rejecting the honours might have appeared equally arrogant, the *optimates* strove to leave Caesar no choice but to be discredited.<sup>219</sup> However, Caesar's awareness of the power of spectacle and his ability to communicate with different social groups, representing both the people and the state (by being simultaneously tribune and dictator), helped him to

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Nicolaus of Damascus (21) notably involves the conspirators Cassius and Casca, and both Lepidus, hesitating to remove the crown from the podium, and persistent Antony, acquire a more negative role (see Toher 2003:141-2).

<sup>218</sup> Following the incidents with the people hailing him as a king and crowning his statues, Caesar and Antony would naturally decide to put an end to the rumours (Carson 1957: 51); Bell (2004: 28) sees the *Lupercalia* as 'a natural setting for Caesar's dramatic flirtations with new modes of self-representation'; according to Sumi (2005:72), Caesar used the festival to communicate to the people his ideas of government, which were not in favour of monarchy; however, the performance perhaps failed to hit its mark, because Caesar wore the garb of ancient Roman kings.

<sup>219</sup> Caesar mediating between accepting and declining honours (Dio 44.3, 7, Appian, 2.108); voting extraordinary honours to create envy (Nicolaus of Damascus 20, Plutarch 57); according to Gradel (2002: 59), the idea that Caesar could pick whichever honours suited him is mistaken, because refusing honours in Roman society could mean a rejection of moral obligations.

combine political measures with an impressive public persona.<sup>220</sup> In such performative dynamics, the Senate fought against Caesar with his own weapons: a new virtual reality of the divine king with an inevitable apotheosis was created for him in order to overlap with the one ‘scripted’ and performed by the general himself. Key to this strategy is the already existing dramaturgical motif employed by Caesar himself – the notion of *hybris*. Although in the *Commentaries* it is Caesar who punishes enemy *hybris*, in the last months of his life he also seems to succumb to a *hybristic* impulse. Thus, Caesar began to perform in a rival theatrical frame, a proper tragedy, its dramatic closure signified by the unavoidable end.

The successful conspiracy against Caesar may be seen as a defeat in this last game of performances. However, Caesar had initiated his audience to participate as characters in his narrative and the emotional charge of this shared reality was underestimated by the *optimates*. Therefore, it was Caesar’s *clementia*, which, although not capable of saving Caesar’s physical life, completely overturned the ideological meaning of the assassination.

## Death

Julius Caesar’s murder, surrounded by the theatrical aura of Roman funeral ritual, has become one of the most poignant events in history. Caesar’s death in the building in Pompey’s theatre complex (an ominous theatrical location) comprises many, almost cliché elements pointing towards its inevitability – the tension at the eve of the deed, the

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<sup>220</sup> According to Yavetz (1969:54-5) *tribunicia potestas* for life was the key to Caesar’s genius; to have proconsular power and that of a tribune (as a mediator between people and state), all in the hands of one man, saved the Republic.

omens, Caesar's almost sacrificial procession towards the Senate meeting, and 'all against one' horrific murder.<sup>221</sup>

A soothsayer (named Spurinna by Suetonius) had warned Caesar that something dreadful would happen on the Ides of March. On his way to Pompey's theatre complex, the dictator met the seer in front of the building; he jokingly remarked that the fateful day has come but he is still alive and well; the soothsayer darkly reminded him – the Ides have come but are not yet gone.<sup>222</sup> This exchange of lines in public raises the stakes of Caesar's performativity – in the face of all omens and feeling unwell, he performs his role as the sarcastic and pragmatic man. There were attempts to warn Caesar of the plot and Plutarch's version is particularly dramatic: a certain Artemidorus struggled through the crowd and seeing that Caesar was giving various documents to an assistant, rushed towards him giving him a note and asking him to read it immediately. However, Caesar was distracted by people wishing to speak to him. Tragic inevitability intensified as he entered the building and, according to Appian, died holding the unread note in his hand.<sup>223</sup>

While Trebonius engaged Antony in a conversation outside, Caesar entered the Senate and was surrounded by the throng of conspirators. Tillius Cimber – chosen to start the assault – pleaded for the pardon of his exiled brother. Caesar refused to deal with the request and deferred it. Cimber gave the signal for action by pulling down Caesar's robe

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<sup>221</sup> Night before the Ides (Appian, 2.115, Plutarch 63, Dio 44.17, Suetonius, 81); Decimus convinces the dictator to disregard superstitions and attend the senate (Plutarch 64, Suetonius 81, Appian 2.115, Dio 44.18, Nicolaus of Damascus 24); in his curious parallel between Caesar's life and the narrative of the New Testament, Carotta (2005:183-4) sees Decimus Brutus as the Judas figure.

<sup>222</sup> Encounter with the soothsayer (Dio 44.18, Plutarch 63, Suetonius 81, Appian 2.149); the unsuccessful sacrifices (Dio 44.17, Plutarch, 63, Suetonius 81); according to Appian (2.116), Caesar took the auspices at the entrance of the senate and laughed at the fact that the victim had no heart.

<sup>223</sup> Someone bringing news when Caesar had left, Artemidorus attempting to deliver the letter in person (Appian 2.116, Plutarch 64); Caesar receives the note, but puts it away with other documents (Dio 44.18, Suetonius 81).

to expose his neck; the conspirators brought out their daggers and attacked. History holds its breath and beholds Caesar's last performance. According to Cassius Dio, Caesar was unable to say or do anything and only managed to cover his face. In other accounts, Caesar fights back, wounding Cassius with his stylus and hurling Casca with great strength, his fight similar to that of a trapped animal. Seeing Brutus finally crushed Caesar's spirit and, possibly uttering 'you too, my son' in Greek, he died at the foot of Pompey's statue.<sup>224</sup>

Considering Caesar's death in the light of the power play of virtual realities of *hybris* outlined above requires a retrospective detour back to the events building up to his assassination. Caesar opposes kingship in two theatrical episodes – the *Feriae Latinae* and the *Lupercalia*. Another act, however, is considered the true demonstration of Caesar's haughtiness. Not surprisingly, it happens in a public space, in the forum or, according to Suetonius, in front of the temple of Venus Genetrix. A great multitude of senators and magistrates proceeded to meet Caesar and bestow extravagant honours on him. As the procession approached, Caesar committed a grave mistake – he received the delegation whilst remaining seated.<sup>225</sup> In this episode, a kingly Caesar seems to contradict the messages of the *Lupercalia* and *Feriae Latinae*, aiming to demonstrate precisely his rejection of kingship. Only Nicolaus of Damascus places this scene before the *Lupercalia*. If this was the case, then the later events emerge as Caesar's attempt to dispel

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<sup>224</sup> Caesar's death (Dio, 44.19, Appian, 2.117 (Trebonius talks to Antony), Suetonius, 82, Plutarch, 66 (Decimus talks to Antony), Nicolaus of Damascus, 24); according to Plutarch and Appian, Caesar died at the foot of Pompey's statue, which stood as his nemesis, covered with the dictator's blood. Caesar's uttering 'you too, my son' is noted by Suetonius and Dio; although Shakespeare immortalizes this line as 'Et tu, Brute? – Then fall Caesar!' (*Julius Caesar*, III.1), Pelling (2009:267) points out that the line had been used in *The True Tragedy of Richard Duke of York* in 1595.

<sup>225</sup> This incident (Appian 2.107; Dio 44.8; Suetonius 78; Plutarch 60; Nicolaus of Damascus 22); the remark made by Bell (2004:51) is appropriate for this scene: '[S]urrounded by friends and flunkies notable enemies dead or silent, Caesar would no longer suffer severe constraint. His determined exploration of an acceptable charisma could become bizarrely bold...'.

the impression of haughtiness, regardless of whether it was intentional or not. And yet, in this incident, Caesar seems to demonstrate belief in his absolute power to the point of immersing himself into the role, created for him by the Senate. However, it may be the case that Caesar had made a conscious decision to appear arrogant in order to challenge his opponents. The plausibility of such conduct can be elucidated by considering Caesar's reaction to the conspiracy.

### **Whose conspiracy is it?**

Despite his absolute power, Caesar remained accessible and visible to the public in accordance with the natural conduct of Roman magistrates. However, his attitude towards political adversaries and his neglect of personal security was rather recklessly light-hearted. Although he possibly suspected the conspiracy, Caesar seemed to place too much trust in the effects of his *clementia* as he famously dismissed his bodyguards.<sup>226</sup> Alternatively, either due to political naiveté, or belief in his invincibility, Caesar remained ignorant of the conspiracy until he saw the daggers in the Senate. However, in the light of Caesar's ability to construct an effective performative reality, it is important to consider the possibility of his conscious anticipation of his assassination.

Caesar allegedly claimed that it was in the interest of the state to preserve him alive, because his death would cause new war. Seemingly the claim of a megalomaniac,

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<sup>226</sup> On Caesar disregarding his personal safety: he disliked being surrounded by guards (Appian 2.118); he dismissed his Spanish guards, usually attending him with drawn swords (Suetonius 86); he dismissed his bodyguards, accepting to be watched over by senators and knights (Dio 44.7). According to Bourne (1977:431), 'Caesar's attitude toward the dangers of assassination and death is doubly Epicurean'; 'He would not exist in anxiety'. Ridley (2000:226) offers a highly speculative suggestion that dismissing the bodyguards may be related to Caesar's epilepsy since epileptics are five times more likely to die from suicide.



this can also be read as a smart political foresight.<sup>227</sup> However, between the megalomaniac and the shrewd politician stands another Caesar who presents a *performance of trust*, in which openness and accessibility underline the professed sincerity of *clementia*. It is doubtful that Caesar could remain ignorant of the action against him, especially since this was not the first plot after the end of the Civil War; therefore, he was either guarded secretly (to no avail) or was willing to risk all for the sake of the dramatic effect a possible conspiracy would have on his image.<sup>228</sup> However, if the latter possibility is accepted, we arrive at the hypothesis that Caesar may have allowed his murder in order to incite the creation of his martyrdom. Seen in the light of Caesar's sense of the theatrical, this assumption of Caesar anticipating his assassination is worth investigating in more detail.<sup>229</sup>

Caesar's death achieves its powerful effect on the audience through a successful fusion of epic and dramatic elements. Early in 44 BC, Caesar was to embark on a massive eastern campaign against Parthia, an expression of his desire 'to achieve immortality through accomplishments extraordinary and unmatched'.<sup>230</sup> Although aimed to avenge the disastrous defeat and death of Crassus at Carrhae in 56 BC, Caesar planned to subdue the Dacians, march along the Caspian sea to Mount Caucasus and then through Scythia

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<sup>227</sup> It is in the interest of the state to preserve Caesar's life (Suetonius 86); Caesar demonstrated political realism with this claim (Canfora (2007: 322-4)); provided his attitude is not ironical, Cicero also thought Caesar should continue to live, perhaps not for himself but for his country (Cicero, *Pro Marcello* 8)

<sup>228</sup> Collins (1955: 456-7) accepts the complete secrecy of the plot as a sign for Caesar's political isolation. The earlier conspiracy was probably organized in 45 BC: shortly after the victory at Munda, Gaius Trebonius tried to implicate Antony in a murder plot against Caesar. Antony, however, remained faithful to the dictator (discussed in Canfora 2007:263-8).

<sup>229</sup> From there, we are but a step away from granting Caesar the staging of his own assassination. Although necessarily speculative, this hypothesis flourishes in the play *Die Verschwörung* by the historian Walter Jens. Tired by the burden of power, with his health deteriorating, Jens' Caesar consciously allows and encourages his assassination, because he needs a spectacular end, '...ein Caesar-Tod' (Jens 1974: 20); in his afterword to the text, Jens maintains the historical possibility of such 'staging'.

<sup>230</sup> Sumi (2005:49). Caesar's plans for the future may remain a matter of speculation, save for the Parthian campaign we should accept as certain (Collins 1955:458).

possibly to attack the Germans from the east. For this purpose, he gathered and dispatched towards the east sixteen legions plus cavalry. He also positioned new colonies as potential supply bases; since the planned duration of the campaign was three years, important magistracies were assigned in advance.<sup>231</sup>

The planned campaign poses problems for accepting Caesar's conscious planning or awareness of the conspiracy. A possible explanation, based on presumptions of his deteriorating health, is that Caesar indeed planned his death but that was to happen precisely during the Parthian campaign.<sup>232</sup> Considering the campaign in an epic 'guise' may resolve the apparent inconsistency of Caesar's plans to allow his assassination while actively preparing for a campaign. The Parthian campaign is essential for Caesar's epic image, regardless of his ultimate failure to embark on it: the fact that he was murdered four days before his departure, adds a tragic air of a glorious impetus cut short. In view of his longing for conquest, Caesar's assassination becomes the enactment of the tragedy of mortality with campaign and murder entwined in a supreme fusion of epic and tragedy.<sup>233</sup> Ignorant of the secret plot, the Roman people in their Caesarean reality were not prepared for the Ides of March; to them, Caesar's murder in the midst of preparation for the campaign came as a true *peripeteia*, an unexpected reversal indeed. In his *Commentaries*, the author Caesar uses peril in order to emphasize his imminent victory. In

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<sup>231</sup> The Parthian campaign (Plutarch, 58, Appian, 2.110, Suetonius, 44, Dio, 43.51); see Yavetz (1983:147) on the strategically-placed colonies from Propontis along the southern coast of the Black Sea; Malitz (1984) discusses the motives behind the campaign and Caesar's political adversaries' negative attitude towards revenge for Crassus' unlawful war. Malitz suggests that given the unrest in Syria at the time, it is possible that Caesar marketed the campaign as a part of the settling of *pax provinciarum*.

<sup>232</sup> Whether Caesar was unable to re-integrate to Roman politics and to govern the empire after securing his absolute power is a matter of debate; for an overview, see Yavetz (1983). Will (2008: 123-5) sees the campaign as a way for Caesar to escape political issues at home; in a letter to Atticus written after the Ides, Cicero also notes that Caesar would not have returned from the east (*Letters to Atticus* 381(15.4)); on inactivity bringing illness and restlessness to Caesar: Appian (2.110); Plutarch (58).

<sup>233</sup> '...the primary epic as a genre is not so much concerned with heroic achievement in itself as with the affective cost of achievement' (Greene 1999: 192).

historiography, Caesar's physical death is the peril, heralding the ultimate victory of his spirit and legacy.

### **Performing the funeral**

By failing to throw Caesar's body into the Tiber and allowing Antony to conduct the state funeral procession, the conspirators opened another act of the Caesarean play, eradicating any possibility of justifying their actions.

Accounts on the funeral are more or less consistent: the dictator was brought to the forum and displayed in an ivory bed, covered with purple and gold, placed possibly in a tabernacle, modelled on the Venus Genetrix temple. Apart from the body, perhaps not clearly visible to everyone, there were many elements, characteristic for the Roman funeral, magnifying its emotional impact. Both Suetonius and Appian refer to pageantry and procession, which is likely to mean the customary 'parade' of the *imagines*, or the ancestors' masks, each taking his place at the rostra. Theatricality was emphasized by the appearance of a player who impersonated the deceased. In Caesar's case, the actor(s) named the assassins, with Caesar emerging from the underworld, as it were, and exposing the murderers.<sup>234</sup> The actor uttered the highly evocative lines from Pacuvius' *Armorum Iudicium* (*The trial of Arms*): 'Oh that I should have spared these men to slay me!'<sup>235</sup>

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<sup>234</sup> Suetonius 83-5; Appian 2.146; although in the Late Republic the impersonators may not have used their voices, they did so in Imperial times, their acts acquiring more satirical elements; for a discussion of performative elements of funerals, see Sumi (2002) who allows for five 'Caesars' – one for each triumph – appearing in triumphal clothes; see also Bodel (1996); on the relationship between triumphs and funerals, see Versnel (1970). However, according to Sumi (2005:104), in order to underscore Caesar's divine lineage, the ancestral masks were not presented.

<sup>235</sup> Spoken by the impersonators of Caesar (Appian, 2.146); spoken at the funeral, plus lines from Attilius' *Electra* (Suetonius, 84); the performative elements of Caesar's funeral are discussed by Sumi (2002).

Caesar's consular colleague, Antony, presented the *laudatio*. Appian and Dio offer complete speeches highlighting Antony's rhetoric skills and ability to influence the audience; Appian draws an explicit parallel with performance: Antony listed Caesar's honours and oaths taken to protect him; then, as if in religious frenzy, he began a lament, his voice ranging from high pitch to sombre tone. He revealed Caesar's body and his blood-stained robe; the people, like a chorus in a play, mourned Caesar, and their sorrow turned into anger. What seems to have been a *tropaeum* with the blood-stained toga or a wax effigy of Caesar was elevated above the crowd; instead of showing Caesar in his triumphal garb (according to custom), Antony displayed him in his most tragic state, emphasizing the shocking crime.<sup>236</sup> According to Suetonius and Appian, the reading of Caesar's will took place before the funeral and did not have devastating effect for the conspirators; however, Plutarch and Cassius Dio establish a firmer link between the reading of the will and the upheaval that followed: Caesar had made the conspirator Decimus Brutus one of his heirs; moreover, he had bequeathed 300 sestericii to each citizen of Rome. Despite the armed guards, the funeral got out of control perhaps even to the surprise of Antony, whose speech is traditionally considered to stir the audience's emotions. Possessed by frenzy, the people cremated Caesar's body in the forum.<sup>237</sup> His subsequent deification sealed his character forever in the emotional and theatrical, as well as historical texture of the world.

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<sup>236</sup> Antony's speeches (Dio, 44.35-50, Appian, 2.144-6); the robe on a spear is described by Appian (2.146) and Suetonius (84). Interestingly, the *tropaeum* was common to mark the grave for those who had died a violent death, especially on the battlefield; the wax effigy of Caesar, noted by Appian, may have been similar to the images of divinities presented in the theatre (Sumi 2005: 108).

<sup>237</sup> After the hastily erected column on the cremation place (see above, n.172), a temple of the Divine Julius was built at the beginning of 42 BC and the worship of Caesar was introduced in several cities in Italy by the *lex Rufrena* (Yavetz 1969:80).

## **Caesar is dead. Long live Caesar!**

Caesar's self-created image in the *Commentaries* is strongly reflected in his life presented by ancient historiography. Caesar is consistently depicted as having a strong relationship with temporality, based on his exceptional celerity and realized on two levels – the calendar reform and his self-presentation as a personification of the continuity between myth/history and present. The ambiguity of character presented as sublimation of extremities – austerity and luxury, masculine heroism and femininity – is a reaction to Caesar's deliberate polarization of himself against the foreign enemy and should be seen as reflecting his inherent performativity. Caesar transforms the notion of triumphal procession into series of performances and the appearance of Vercingetorix creates unique sense of continuity from narrative to theatrical reality. The senatorial opposition establishes a virtual reality of royal and divine honours seeking to expose Caesar's *hybris*. Although he rejects kingship, Caesar is assassinated, the unrealized Parthian campaign and his tragic death fully utilizing the epic-dramatic nature of his character.

Throughout his career as a *populari* politician, Caesar remains connected to the people of Rome, who are his true audience and possibly characters in his narratives. They benefit from Caesar's *clementia* and are affected by his performativity on a profound emotional level. The fusion of written commentary and physical presence is decisive prerequisite for the full-bodied image of Caesar. Moreover, the relationship between Caesar's personal propaganda and his existence as a character in ancient historiography is the basis of the personage whose dramatic reincarnations are the subject of the following chapters of my study.

## **Chapter 4: Brighter than the Northern star, constant as the speed of light: Julius Caesar in Shakespeare**

William Shakespeare is the creator of the definitive image of Julius Caesar, profoundly complex in its fusion of historical inaccuracies and symbolic prominence. My analysis of *Julius Caesar* aims to take a route different to the often politically contextualized approach, largely centred on the debate relating to the opposition of liberty and tyranny. Instead it offers an alternative view of Shakespeare's Caesar as cumulative character, integral to the process of re-creation of the historical person Julius Caesar. I do not engage in a discussion of Shakespeare's direct textual influences and sources, but instead propose a view of the character as an inter-textual and inter-generic entity. Within the framework outlined above, I accentuate on the significance of Shakespeare's Caesar as an 'heir' to historical Caesar's works, the broad historiographic tradition and Lucan's epic.

The chapter begins with an outline of the perspective of the play as 'awry', the arena of a conflict between two worldviews, respectively those of the conspirators and Caesar himself. Emphasized by his self-referential use of third person, Caesar's performativity aims to subvert the objectivity of the reality, propagated by the conspirators. In effect, his effort to destroy his enemies and to liberate his spirit necessitates Caesar's acceptance of the reality of Brutus and Cassius. The second part of the chapter explores the means to Caesar's victory, namely the utilizing of two definitive Caesarean aspects: speed, the quality established in the *Commentaries* and sustained in historiography and Lucan's epic; irrationality – rejected by historical Caesar, but

manifested by Lucan's demonized Caesar. Shakespeare's Caesar emerges as a character whose physical annihilation becomes the crucial factor for the victorious ascendance of his spirit; as a result, in the process of transcendence between life and afterlife, his above-mentioned epic constituents are transformed to facilitate the elevation of the Caesarean spirit: speed becomes total control of temporality for the Roman world, extending on a meta-level and including the audience; remaining grounded within the texture of the play, irrationality mutates into uncontrollable destructive emotion, embodied by Antony and Octavian – it is exemplified by acts of violence in the city and the ultimate defeat of the conspirators.

## **Network of sources**

The main source of perhaps the most prominent and deeply embedded representation of Caesar in European drama is Plutarch's *Lives* translated by Thomas North from Jacques Amyot's French version and published in 1579. Plutarch's accounts of Caesar, Antony and Brutus employ rich characterization and the dramatization akin to ancient history and their value as Shakespearean sources is unquestionable.<sup>238</sup> It is also accepted that Shakespeare was familiar with Appian's history of the civil wars (translated in 1578 by W. Barker), likely to have served as an inspiration for Brutus' speech and the

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<sup>238</sup> Thomson (1952:243) argues that Plutarch was the 'medium of the Greek tragic spirit' for Shakespeare; on the Greek tragic influence on Shakespeare's *Caesar* channelled through Plutarch, see Pelling (2009): according to him 'the structural issues, and those relating to plot, character, and unity, still feel more Greek than Roman' (265).

theatrical delivery of Mark Antony's funeral oration, material not found in Plutarch. In addition, the influences of Suetonius and Sallust are also recognized.<sup>239</sup>

The play in which Caesar meets his doom, provoked by his kingly aspirations and executed by the efficient conspirators, is accepted as a dramatic recreation of the events described by Plutarch and other ancient historians, more or less familiar to Shakespeare. Naturally, since Caesar's death is represented only in historical accounts, neither the *Commentaries* nor Lucan's epic can be considered as sources of the narrative. Nevertheless, since my study pays special attention to the inter-generic/inter-textual existence of Julius Caesar, I believe that Shakespeare's play offers an elaborate dramatic reception of the themes integral to both Caesar's self-constructed image in his *Commentaries* and his Lucanian character.

The importance of Lucan's characterization of Caesar for the construction of the Shakespearean dictator should not be underestimated. Lucan's poetry reaches an apocalyptic scale, emerging as the natural 'habitat' of a demonic, charismatic Caesar obsessed by wild dreams of world domination. The *Civil War*, both as form and content, has immense value for the epic genre and the subsequent theatrical representations of Caesar, particularly in the Elizabethan and Jacobean theatre, which is also influenced by Seneca's language and style.<sup>240</sup> At the time of the first performance of *Julius Caesar* in

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<sup>239</sup> Muir (1971:118-9) refers to points, specific to Appian's account, used by Shakespeare – for example the spelling of 'Calphurnia', spelled 'Calpurnia' in North's translation. The English edition of Appian's *Roman History* as Shakespearean source is recognized by Boecker (1913), Miola (1983) among others. Influences of Suetonius (Thomson (1952), Thomas (1989)); Sallust (Haverkamp (2011)); for an overview of the popularity and availability of different Roman historical accounts in Shakespeare's time, see Chernaik (2011:7-34). Definitive studies on Shakespeare's sources are Bullough (1964) and MacCallum (1967).

<sup>240</sup> 'Much of Elizabethan poetry that is credited to Seneca should be credited to Lucan' (Thomson 1952: 231); '...though Seneca wrote drama and Lucan epic, both are writers of "tragedy" in the mediaeval sense...' (Blissett 1956: 556-7); However, Blissett holds that Shakespeare's Caesar is not related to Lucan's more melodramatic character. Dilke (1972:93) accepts the influence of Lucan on English Renaissance literature, but states that Shakespeare 'closely follows North's Plutarch, and as a result a far



c.1599 (possibly coinciding with the opening of the Globe theatre), Christopher Marlowe had already translated the first book of the *Civil War*. Lucanian style and imagery, particularly related to Caesar, are evident in Marlowe's own works, such as *Massacre at Paris* and *Tamburlaine*; it has even been suggested that Marlowe is the real author of *Julius Caesar*.<sup>241</sup> Since he attended grammar school, Shakespeare would have read most of the canonical Latin texts, including Seneca. Therefore, it is likely that, in addition to Marlowe's translation, Shakespeare had read Lucan's poem in its entirety in the original either as part of his education or at a later stage. In addition, although Caesar's own works are hardly ever mentioned as possible influence for Shakespeare's tragedy, the *Commentaries* were available from continental Europe, and were also published in London in Latin; *The Gallic War* was translated in English by Arthur Golding (1590).<sup>242</sup>

The fundamental premise of my thesis is that the figure of Caesar exists as a cumulative image, with each work of literature and history adding new layers and enriching the cultural apprehension of his powerful personality, essentially a product of Caesar's self-representation. Therefore, I maintain that Shakespeare should be granted a more 'networked' kind of understanding of his character: reading primary sources, but also acquiring inspiration and knowledge from the rich cultural background of the

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more sympathetic picture of Caesar emerges than in the playwrights who follow Lucan'. For the Senecan influences on English Renaissance depictions of Caesar, in particular the influence of Marc Antoine Muret's sixteenth-century Latin *Julius Caesar*, see Ayres (1910:203-212).

<sup>241</sup> Marlowe's translation was produced in 1593 and published in 1600; before the first English version of the entire poem by Arthur Gorges in 1614, it was available only in Latin. Wells (1923:190) believes that Marlowe had written a play about Caesar as early as 1589 which was re-worked by Shakespeare whose contribution consists of the 'first fifty-seven lines of the opening scene'. On the dating of Shakespeare's Caesar, see MacCallum (1967:168-172)

<sup>242</sup> See Parker (2004:27-9) and Miola (1983: 3-4) who notes that elementary education in Shakespeare's time may have included Lucan; Thomson (1952:17-21) points out that many of Shakespeare's contemporaries were also inaccurate in their rendering of Latin texts. Womersley (1987) notes possible proof for Shakespeare's direct engagement with Caesar's *Commentaries*: Caesar's description of unicorns (*Gallic War* 6.27) is comparable with Decius Brutus' remark that Caesar '...loves to hear | That unicorns may be betrayed with trees' (II.1.204-5).

Renaissance, with its abundant classical imagery and *sententiae*. Such an approach is not only indicative of Shakespeare's literary abilities and wide interests, but, given the immense popularity of the subject of his play, should be seen as a consequence of the creative milieu in which it was conceived and written.<sup>243</sup> Therefore, a consideration of the importance of the Lucanian and Caesarean influences on Shakespeare's Julius will demonstrate the multi-faceted dramatic reception of Caesar and the coherence of his representation across genres and centuries.

### **Conspiracy as virtual reality – subjective interpretation**

At the onset of the discussion, it is important to acknowledge that the perspective from which Shakespeare leads the audience to perceive the narrative is a product of the completely partial viewpoint of the conspirators. Its initial stability depends on the conspirators' success and so the imminent distortion and destruction of this artificial worldview by Caesar's spirit becomes essential for the tragic outcome of the play. In order to elucidate this alternative perspective and the image of Caesar it creates, it is necessary to focus on two major elements, essential for the tragic value of Caesar's assassination in history, which are nevertheless ignored by Shakespeare: the Parthian campaign on which Caesar was due to embark few days after the Ides of March; Caesar's

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<sup>243</sup> A view supported by Thomson (1952); according to Miola (1983: 14), Shakespeare's vision calls for a more organic approach, taking into account 'the ambivalent nature of Shakespeare's drama' and the 'diversity of Rome in the canon and the era'. The immense popularity of Caesar as a dramatic subject in Early Modern England prompted the appearance of numerous plays about him and his conflict with Pompey, most of them now lost (see Jacob (2002) and Ronan (2005)); a list of Caesarean plays is also offered by Chernaik (2011:87-92) and Griffin (2009:392-96).

clemency, particularly shown towards Pompey's supporters, including Brutus and Cassius.<sup>244</sup>

In the previous chapter, I focused on Caesar's death in the midst of the preparations for the Parthian campaign as a highlight of his epic-dramatic representation: the planned campaign acquires legendary proportions (especially in Plutarch) whilst simultaneously elevating the murder into a supreme revelation of Caesar as the embodiment of tragedy and epic. Thus, the idea of dying Caesar as a personification of the tragedy of unfulfilled quest, searching for new heights and new victories, is related to the conjecture of the dictator consciously anticipating his own death.

Although, as this chapter aims to suggest, the conscious anticipation of death should to some extent be accepted as valid for Shakespeare's Caesar too, the missing Parthian 'element' creates a major shift of focus in the narrative. In historiography, Caesar's imminent departure accelerates the conspiracy, since striking on the Ides becomes the last chance of dispatching Caesar; in contrast, the decisive factor for the assassination in Shakespeare's play is the Senate's decision to grant the dictator the title of king, which tilts the scales within the hesitating psyche of Brutus and gives momentum to the plot. Casca mentions that on the fateful meeting of the Senate on the Ides, the title of king and a crown would be voted to Caesar, to be applied everywhere save Italy (I.3.5-8); this implies the spreading of kingly authority in the east, a possibility, which in ancient historiography, but not in the play, is related to a supposed prophecy that only a king would conquer Parthia.<sup>245</sup> Nevertheless, to the conspirators, the proclamation of

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<sup>244</sup> Highly selective in his use of Plutarch's material, Shakespeare omits Caesar's Gallic campaigns, the triumvirate and the crossing of the Rubicon (discussed in Chernaik 2011: 92).

<sup>245</sup> This might be a possible reference to Caesar's Parthian campaign; Plutarch (60) mentions the prophecy, allegedly found in the Sibylline books.

kingship, regardless of its symbolic or actual significance, serves as a welcome justification of an assassination, seemingly prompted by republican ideals.

The second missing element, equally fundamental for the dramaturgy of Caesar's death, is related more directly to his character: Shakespeare avoids highlighting the fact that Caesar had saved and promoted the political careers of both Brutus and Cassius after the Civil War. Dramaturgically, the omission of *clementia* appears in accordance with Caesar's severe attitude towards the brother of Metellus Cimber, whose exile the dictator refuses to reconsider moments before his death. Moreover, Shakespeare's depiction of Caesar as devoid of benevolence may appear reminiscent of Lucan's demonic Caesar and thus point to Shakespeare's willingness to recognize Caesar, consisting of an amalgam of historical and epic representations.<sup>246</sup> Nevertheless, Caesarean benevolence and restraint, as I have discussed in the previous chapter, has important implications for the evaluation of the general's image both on the battlefield and in Rome. Caesar's *clementia*, especially shown towards Pompeian captives, is firmly established in the *Commentaries* by means of contrasting the general's humane behaviour to the cruelty of the Pompeians. Although historiography may contest Caesar's altruism by suggesting that expediency drives his clemency, ancient historians nevertheless pay attention to Caesar's concern to preserve Brutus's life after the battle at Pharsalus; consequently, Caesar's death emerges as a tragedy of mercy – he is slain by people who owe him their lives, the 'friends' turning out to be traitors.<sup>247</sup> Clemency is fundamental for the redemption of Caesar's image from the

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<sup>246</sup> The issue of Caesarean *clementia* in Lucan has been addressed in the relevant chapter. Depriving Caesar of his crucial virtue of clemency may signify Shakespeare's anti-tyrannical stance. However, as I have outlined above, this study does not focus on references to contemporary political debates in the play. Thus I agree with Girard (2000:199) who sees: '...an antipolitical stance in Shakespeare that suggests a rather sardonic view of history'; any political cause in the play could be defended equally well because Shakespeare 'deals with human situations mimetically' (2000:197).

<sup>247</sup> Caesar's concern to preserve Brutus' life (Plutarch 46; Appian 2.112).

accusations of tyranny and its lack in Shakespeare's play influences the moral judgement to be passed on the conspirators. In his tragic dilemma, Brutus does not consider the gratitude for his own salvation; instead, the problem of how to preserve the man he loves and yet to prevent his tyrannical aspirations takes the shape of general moral lament for the necessity of physical elimination in favour of constructing a better political system.

The omission of the two elements – *clementia* and the Parthian campaign – has immense importance for Caesar's character, since it establishes and amplifies the bias on which the tragedy is based. Thus, there is a notable change in focus: from a tragedy of epic and *clementia*, it is transformed into a tragedy of performance, interpretation and emulation, in the aftermath of which Caesar emerges as a pure and destructive emotion, not unlike the spirit of the Lucanian epic villain.

In a peculiar way, with Caesar offstage most of the time, the play creates a perspective resembling Tom Stoppard's twentieth-century play *Rozencrantz and Guildenstern are Dead*: Caesar, not unlike Hamlet and his royal relatives in Stoppard's text, appears spasmodically in four scenes; the main characters – Brutus and Cassius – experience fragments of Caesar's reality; the rest is left to their imagination and speculative knowledge, and to the interpretation of other characters. Such is Casca's account of Antony offering the crown to Caesar thrice, and the dictator's reluctant refusal to accept it; in fact this *reported* reluctance sets off the conspiracy until then existing only as the tormented thoughts of philosophically-minded Brutus and envious Cassius. The audience hears about Caesar's physical infirmities: Cassius recalls a swimming contest with Caesar, in which the latter almost drowned in the Tiber; on another occasion, again allegedly witnessed by Cassius in the past, Caesar had fever and cried 'as a sick girl'

(I.2.). Following the celebration of the Lupercal festivities and Antony's attempts to crown him, Caesar suffers an epileptic fit in the market-place, according to Casca.<sup>248</sup> However, apart from a notoriously fictitious deafness in his right ear, pointed out by Caesar himself in his dialogue with Antony (I.2.212), the text does not imply the visual expression of any of his frailties. Therefore, Shakespeare's perception of Caesar invites those familiar with historiography to recognize the conspirators' partiality. This is best revealed in the contradiction between Cassius' account and the fact that ancient historians celebrate Caesar's swimming abilities. Nevertheless, other members of the audience, introduced to Caesar through the play, can easily be immersed in Cassius' world of personal hatred and falsification of history.<sup>249</sup> Moreover, the fact that Shakespeare has chosen to portray Caesar as an *interpretation* attests to the playwright's awareness of the fusion between reality and interpretation in Caesar's image.

As a result, Shakespeare's Caesar is focalized exclusively from his enemies' perspective; his opponents, excluded from the Julian world, project their bias into a reality, struggling to become the play's main perspective. Subjectivity of judgement and questionable truthfulness of appearance involve the audience in the 'other', frustrated viewpoint of the enemy which is, of course, equally valid – after all, as Shakespeare's Cicero says: '...men construe things after their fashion | Clean from the purpose of the things themselves' (I.3.34-5).

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<sup>248</sup> Stirling (1969: 216-7) discusses the traditional symbolism of epilepsy as the divine punishment for people suffering from excessive pride and ambition. According to Bonjour (1958:70) the falling sickness can be treated as an expression of dramatic irony – foreshadowing Caesar's fall. All quotations are from Shakespeare, William. 2005. *Julius Caesar*. Edited by N. Sanders (Penguin Shakespeare).

<sup>249</sup> Accounts mentioning Caesar's swimming abilities that may have been available to Shakespeare are those of Appian (2.90), Suetonius (44) and the *Alexandrian War* (21). Thomas (2005) argues that the play is conscious of the misuse of the source material and is questioning the subjectivity of history.

By emphasizing the biased perspective of the conspirators, Shakespeare expresses his reaction to a specific aspect of Caesarean historical reception, which I have identified as the development of a ‘virtual reality’. Discussed in chapter 3, ‘virtual reality’ was taken to denote the Senate’s policy towards Caesar in the last months before his death. According to ancient historical accounts, despite his resistance against provocations, Caesar eventually succumbed to his opponents’ attempts to elevate him to dangerous heights of kingship and autocracy. I maintained that by entering this new reality Caesar consciously and performatively challenged its validity from within. With Shakespeare underlining the bias of the conspirators, the attempts on Caesar’s part to dispel the kingship allegations – evident in ancient historiography – are omitted; the controversial fate of the two tribunes who order the removal of the diadems crowning Caesar’s statues is exaggerated.<sup>250</sup> As a result, the audience perceives Shakespeare’s Caesar as already playing the role bestowed to him by the Senate, as it were, and acting in conformity with the conspirators’ virtual reality. The best example of the virtual nature of this world is Brutus’ soliloquy, in which he convinces himself that Caesar’s tyranny is like a serpent’s egg, and lest it would grow mischievous, it must be killed in the shell (II.1.10-34). Similarly to the reported physical infirmities noted above, Brutus’ reasoning is based solely on potential outcomes of Caesar’s growing power.<sup>251</sup>

Through Caesar’s fragmented image as potential menace, Shakespeare constructs a view of the character as a product of subjective interpretation and as a result tacitly undermines the credibility of the conspirators’ views. The issue of the identification of

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<sup>250</sup> I have referred to the antagonism between Caesar and the two tribunes in chapter 3 (see above, n. 215).

<sup>251</sup> Brutus creates an artificial world, in which he is master of virtue, but is doomed by his blind self-esteem (Leggatt 1988:144); Bonjour (1958:18) also reflects on Brutus fashioning his own reality to host the tyrant Caesar.

the audience's perspective with that of Brutus and Cassius is further complicated by the conspiracy's professed performativity.<sup>252</sup> The importance of the notion of performing for all major characters in the play subverts the cool-headed objectivity proclaimed by Brutus and eventually exposes the subjective motives behind the deed.

Cassius proclaims his wish to act as the mirror of Brutus' soul, in which he can 'see' his anti-Caesarean spirit (I.2.66-70). Casting himself as the interpreter of his associate's anxiety, Cassius subtly encourages Brutus to play the role of his famous ancestor, which leads to the establishing of Brutus' deeply-rooted personal motivation to commit to the leading part in the plot (I.2.157-160). The emulation of the ancient founder of the Republic is re-kindled after Brutus receives the notes set by Cassius at various locations, including his praetor's chair, and at the foot of his ancestor's statue.<sup>253</sup> In Act II, when the plot gains momentum at the meeting at Brutus' house, everyone is already engaged in a show of appearances: Brutus advises the conspirators against the murder of Antony and emphasizes the need to 'be sacrificers, but not butchers' (II.1.166), because thus 'appearing to the common eyes, we shall be called purgers, not murderers' (179-180).<sup>254</sup> This concern with the popular reception of the assassination evokes the need to construct elaborate performative identities, once again expressed by Brutus:

Let not our looks put on our purposes,

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<sup>252</sup> On the conspirators' performativity, see Brower (1971:228) and Simmons (1974:87-91); Chernaik (2011: 84) interprets the performance of the conspirators as an attempt to escape from self-knowledge and bad conscience.

<sup>253</sup> Simmons (1974:74) notes that unlike in Plutarch's account, in Shakespeare's play, the letters for Brutus are being forged by Cassius, implying that the people may not have been dissatisfied with Caesar.

<sup>254</sup> According to Girard (2000:215), Brutus' sacrifice fails, because it is 'contaminated with mimetic rivalry' and the conspirators are people with mixed motives; this is why Brutus says 'let us be sacrificers', instead of 'we are sacrificers'. Pelling (2009:270) makes the important observation that the reference to sacrifice is present in Plutarch, but not in the Amyot/North translation.



But bear it as our Roman actors do,

With untired spirits and formal constancy. (II.1.224-6)

After the meeting, Brutus talks to his wife – Portia – who shows that as a proof of her constancy she has given herself a voluntary wound in the thigh. This (Stoic?) constancy implies she can perform indifference whilst secretly suffering and this should attest to her ability to keep Brutus’ secrets. In the scene immediately after the assassination, while Caesar’s body lies drenched in blood at the foot of Pompey’s statue, Cassius exclaims:

How many ages hence

Shall this our lofty scene be acted over

In states unborn and accents yet unknown? (III.1.111-13)

Indeed, since ‘historical heroes need the mimetic reinforcement of posterity to feel like historical heroes’, Cassius’ lines are an expression of Shakespeare’s lucid awareness of the interrelated processes of history- and theatre-making.<sup>255</sup>

An important aspect of the characters of Brutus and Cassius underlining the subjectivity of their standpoint is performativity in relation to their emulation of Caesar. Brutus’ drama lies in the dilemma whether to murder a man he loves, or to save the Republic. However, despite positioning himself as the opposite to Caesar and naturally rejecting any open association with the dictator, he is engaged in an unconscious

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<sup>255</sup> Girard (2000:218). ‘The transformation of ritual into theatrical politics runs parallel with its transformation into the theater properly speaking’ (Girard 2000:218); Kezar (2005:244) treats Cassius’ speech about the future performances of the assassination as a demonstration of Shakespeare’s awareness of the ‘transformation of historical fact by collaborative literary manufacture’.

emulation. He is always in danger of becoming Caesar, as it were – he takes the lead in the conspiracy and emerges as a potential direct substitute for Caesar, despite his own visions of republican constitutionalism. Not surprisingly, during his speech after the murder, Brutus is easily proclaimed as the new Caesar by the crowd (III.2.51). Cassius' emulation of Caesar is more personal and his painful awareness of his incapacity to reach the level of Caesar's accomplishment transforms it into mockery and hatred.<sup>256</sup> In his account of saving Caesar during the swimming contest, Cassius ironically compares himself to Aeneas, carrying his father Anchises on his shoulders from Troy. Since Caesar's mythological ancestry going back to Aeneas and Venus is well-known, Cassius' comparison strikes home; later, Cassius professes his bravery during the storm:

[...] and, thus unbraced, Casca, as you see,  
Have bared my bosom to the thunder-stone;  
And when the cross blue lightning seemed to open  
The breast of heaven, I did present myself  
Even in the aim and very flash of it. (I.3.46-52)

Cassius had challenged the gods in a manner reminiscent of that of Lucanian Caesar when he is seen on the small boat, attempting to cross over from Greece to Italy, sailing through the great storm and exclaiming: 'How mighty is the gods' toil to throw

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<sup>256</sup> On similarities between Brutus and Caesar, see Girard (2000:197), who defines Caesar as 'neurotically superior', whereas the conspirators remain 'neurotically inferior'; however, in a different situation, Caesar and Brutus would be practical doubles. By mixing hatred with awe, Cassius in fact exalts Caesar (Brower 1971: 220); Cassius' hatred towards Caesar is also noted by McNeir (1971:8).

me down...’ (*Civil War*, 5.655).<sup>257</sup> Nevertheless, similarly to the instances discussed above, the audience receives a different idea of Cassius’ Caesarean emulation depending on their knowledge of Caesar’s reception history.

Emulation, combined with performativity, is a defining factor behind the conspirators’ actions and is crucial for assessing Caesar’s character as an influence and model for those around him: ‘[I]n emulation, the admiration that generates a desire to imitate someone easily turns into rivalry, the desire to excel him, and finally becomes the desire to defeat and destroy him and take his place’.<sup>258</sup> Such rivalry attests to the subjective motives of the conspirators, who, driven either by their personal hatred towards Caesar (Cassius) or pride and political ambition (Brutus), are ready to commit a murder and justify it as beneficial for the Republic.

The above examples illustrate how the identification with the just cause of the characters at the heart of conspiracy is conditioned by performative acts. In addition to a heavily biased perspective, Shakespeare’s audience is presented with characters conscious of their performance, which generates further issues regarding the validity of their agenda. Since they need to make their reality actual, the physical deed – the murder of Caesar – is the act necessary to validate for posterity their subjective motives for assassination. However, Shakespeare involves the audience in the opposition’s (virtual) reality as the only perspective while simultaneously recognizing a hidden, Caesarean reality menacing and eventually destroying the world of conspiracy.

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<sup>257</sup> The connection which Cassius establishes with Aeneas is discussed by Brower (1971:219-20) and Miola (1983: 88-89), who treats Cassius’ walk in the storm as an allusion to book 5 of the *Aeneid*, in which Aeneas bares his chest to the thunderbolts; however, Miola admits that the storm is a sign of divine favour for Aeneas, whereas Cassius uses it to proclaim his own manhood, a statement, which, I believe, encourages the connection between Lucanian Caesar and Shakespearean Cassius.

<sup>258</sup> (Kahn 2005:272); ‘What we are shown is a deep, competitive thrust towards personal dominance shared by all four major characters’ (McAlindon 1991:89).

In his account of the events at the Lupercal, Casca compares the reaction of the people to Caesar's appearance to that of an actor onstage: 'If the rag-tag people did not clap him and hiss him according as he pleased and displeased them, as they use to do the players in the theatre, I am no true man' (I.2.257-260). Although they seem to acknowledge Caesar's theatricality, the conspirators underestimate its power. By constructing the rival, Caesarean perspective, which gradually, but uncompromisingly invades the narrative, Shakespeare exposes the conspirators' ultimate failure to establish their views as 'objective' reality and implicitly challenges the truthfulness of our own perception of stage reality. The resulting ambiguity of the notions of real, virtual, acting and being also reflects on the significance of relativity and theatricality in history.<sup>259</sup> The Caesarean reality is essentially performative, with Caesar's public performance illuminated by the meta-theatrical references of the play.

## Caesar's performance

The virtual world, construed by the conspirators, is dominated by the towering malignant tyrant-to-be Caesar, deprived of any traits of clemency and menacing the Republic with autocratic rule. Shakespeare depicts a persona of contrasting greatness and (reported) physical frailty and thus, in the conspirators' (and presumably the audience's) eyes, Caesar is a man who has overreached himself to the point of kingly arrogance. The speculative infirmities I noted above attest to his mortality and point to his *hybristic* behaviour. Indeed, Cassius' speech in Act I, scene 2 concerns past events, which can

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<sup>259</sup> '[N]o play of Shakespeare's shows characters so self-consciously *making* history, shaping the world about them and attempting to project meanings into the future' (Thomas 2005: 92); Shakespeare's theatre 'showed the theater-machine at work in the production of history' (Haverkamp 2011: 8).

leave the audience (and some characters) wondering how such a frail and characterless man could possibly reach divine heights. Instead of admiration for the general's will to power, the effect sought by Cassius is to provoke a frustration with the fact that this man has become the champion of the state: 'Brutus and Caesar. What should be in that 'Caesar'? | Why should that name be sounded more than yours?' (I.2.141-2).

The virtual infirmities I have touched upon are crucial for the unravelling of the complexity of Shakespeare's Caesar and are related directly to the fact that he is not constructed as a proper dramatic/tragic character. Traditionally, the generic difference between epic and tragedy entails a focus shift towards the inner experience and the individual dilemmas. The ruminations of Brutus serve as a good example of his tragic character: he indulges in long soliloquies and torments himself as to whether his love for Caesar or his love for the Republic should prevail. Caesar's brief appearances and seemingly vain and arrogant behaviour stand in stark contrast to the psychologically drawn Brutus and consequently he emerges as a pseudo-protagonist who, despite giving his name to the play, appears to be a rather two-dimensional character lacking true (tragic) individuality.

However, in order to demonstrate the depth of Shakespeare's Caesar, it is important to consider the character as a reflection of a specific dichotomy, evident in his portrayal in ancient historiography but based on the irrationality Caesar projects onto his enemies in the *Commentaries* and the Caesarean *furor* depicted by Lucan. Inevitably, the 'objective' idiom in historiography challenges Caesar's self-projected image of reasonability and ascribes to him a certain degree of irrationality; as a result, the dictator emerges as an embodiment of an all-too-human, but sometimes problematic combination

of reason and emotion, strength and femininity, austerity and luxury. I have argued that the key to understanding the image of Caesar as man of contrasts is to consider his performative nature. Offering a new take on Caesar's performativity, Shakespeare relates this quality to the character's aim to break the ideological, subjective world of Brutus and his colleagues in order to establish his own reality. Therefore, Caesar's performativity in Shakespeare is framed within peculiar dramaturgical play of perspectives. The world that appears actual on stage is in fact a play-within-a play, the virtual and performative reality of the conspirators which calls for an equally (and, we shall see, superbly) performative Caesar, who is 'real' only insofar as he exists as the projection or interpretation of the conspirators. It is only within this framework that statements such as 'for always I am Caesar' (I.2.211) may indeed be considered an empty boastful exclamation of somebody with divine aspirations.

Since Shakespeare does not reveal Caesar's thought process and state of mind, in the four brief scenes before his assassination he appears as an arrogant, rather self-absorbed man. However, it is important to acknowledge that his behaviour is determined by the fact that he is always surrounded by people except for a single occasion in which he utters three lines, concerning the unsettling night and Calphurnia's nightmares, spoken before the servant enters (II.2). Caesar's existence is conditioned by the audience and as a construct he has no interiority. In order to emphasize the importance of Caesar's relationship with his spectators, Shakespeare alters some of the locations for events described by Plutarch: the supposed epileptic fit suffered by Caesar in front of the senators is reported by Casca to have taken place in front of the populace; Caesar, recovering from his fit and perceiving the multitude's joy at his refusal of the crown,

theatrically offers to have his throat cut, only to faint again and later excuse his behaviour with his illness – this act is also presented as having happened in front of the Roman citizens, not among his friends as in Plutarch's account.<sup>260</sup>

Caesar's self-referential use of the third person in Shakespeare's tragedy is often treated as a clear sign of kingly detachment, akin to the royal 'we'. However, in my view, taking such explanation as its face value would be missing the point – instead of a character trait, the use of the third person should be treated as an evidence for the performative mode Caesar is operating in. Historical Caesar uses the third person as means to create the alleged objectivity of his *Commentaries*. It also enhances the potential performative mode of distribution of the works – since a performance/recitation would not entail an actor actually impersonating Caesar, the third person remains a useful device in the presentation of the character. Employed in the performative medium of Shakespeare, the third person emphasises the distancing of the character from himself, as it were: in the theatrical setting, performed by an actor, Caesar is immediately confined to the world of mortal humans, and his larger-than-life self appears unnatural and exaggerated.<sup>261</sup>

However, despite the initial impression that it is a stable pattern in the speech of Shakespeare's Caesar, the third person is constantly interchanged with the character's 'I'. That this evident flexibility of Caesar's speech serves as a clear indication of his

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<sup>260</sup> This event in Plutarch's account (60) is related to Caesar receiving the senators whilst remaining seated; perceiving his mistake, the dictator goes home and offers his throat to anyone (amongst his followers) willing to strike him. The meeting between Caesar and the senate is discussed in more detail in the chapter on historiography.

<sup>261</sup> Martindale (1990) does not accept the third person as a link between Shakespeare and Caesar's *Commentaries*; although I agree that the *Commentaries* '...create a (spurious) sense of objectivity', whereas 'Shakespeare's Caesar engages in conscious self-dramatization as the great man' (151), the impossibility to prove a direct influence should not devalue the insights emerging from considering an implicit parallels between the two representations of Caesar – self-representation in the *Commentaries* and meta-theatrical self-representation of the Shakespearean character.

performative self is demonstrated in numerous occasions, the first being Caesar's initial appearance – his meeting with the soothsayer who warns him about the Ides of March:

Who is in the press that calls on me?

I hear a tongue shriller than all the music

Cry 'Caesar!' Speak. Caesar is turned to hear (I.2.15-17).

The second scene in which Caesar appears is after the Lupercal festivities. Somewhat distraught after being offered the crown by Antony, the dictator speaks to him in an ambiguous semi-private setting, and comments on his suspicions of Cassius with his 'lean and hungry look' (I.2.193). In the dialogue, Caesar speaks twenty-two lines, but refers to himself as 'Caesar' only once. The beginning of his speech about the reasons behind his suspicion is particularly significant:

Would he were fatter! But I fear him not;

Yet if my name were liable to fear,

I do not know the man I should avoid

So soon as that spare Cassius.... (I.2.197-200)

After ten lines, we hear the third person: 'I rather tell thee what is to be feared | Than what I fear; for always I am Caesar' (I.2.210-11).

In the first instance, Caesar responds to the name he is called by confirming that he is the man sought by the soothsayer. In the second instance, he confirms the



importance of the name, which in this case becomes a synonym of fearlessness.<sup>262</sup> In the light of these two self-referential statements, the third – ‘for always I am Caesar’ – marks the affirmation of his identification with the name, emphasizing the status quo, effectively, the public role Caesar has chosen to play: ‘for always [I will play] Caesar’.

In Act II, Caesar is finally persuaded by his wife not to leave his house on the Ides; however, devious Decius attempts to persuade the dictator to change his mind: after Decius’ favourable interpretation of Calphurnia’s nightmare, Caesar finally consents, meets the conspirators and entertains them before going to the Senate.<sup>263</sup> Caesar speaks forty-three lines, but refers to himself in third person only three times.

The above examples demonstrate that the inherent flexibility of referring to himself both in the formal, kingly ‘Caesar’ and the ordinary ‘I’ is an established pattern throughout the play. This provokes questions regarding the nature of the performative ‘mask’ of Caesar, the identity of his real self and the extent to which the latter is revealed. Since glimpses of Caesar’s real character are perceived only as an alternate state to the more distinctively represented persona – the embodiment of the conspirators’ vision – Shakespeare challenges the notion of ‘real’ and creates a tension between Caesar’s two mental states.

My analysis considers performative Caesar as a fusion of important inter-textual elements, reaching beyond Shakespeare’s direct reception of Plutarch and other sources: the notion of performing is related to Caesar’s self-referential use of the third person in

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<sup>262</sup> Braden (1985) discusses the importance of the name in Senecan plays (the character establishing links between identity and power) and its influence on Renaissance theatre. According to Chernaik (2011:93) the name ‘Caesar’ is ‘endowed with a magical quality, indicative of an ideal or reputation which one must live up to’.

<sup>263</sup> In her nightmare, Calphurnia sees the bleeding statue of Caesar, with people washing their hands in the blood; Decius’ interpretation is that ‘[...] from you great Rome shall suck | Reviving blood [...]’ (II.2.87-8). Treating the play as a satire on papal Rome, Parker (1995:254) sees the image of lactating Caesar as a parody of the lactating/bleeding Christ/church, popular in medieval times.

the *Commentaries*; the essential traits of the individual to be found beneath the public persona chosen by Caesar are influenced by Lucanian representation.<sup>264</sup>

### **Performing constancy/embodying *furor***

Although, in a sense, Shakespeare's Caesar sustains his enigmatic image, fostered by ancient historiography, aspects of what may be considered the 'real' Caesar can be traced in the victorious spirit that haunts the stage in the second half of the play. In order to identify these aspects, it is necessary to explore the transition from Caesarean corporeality to spirit, paying particular attention to the scenes depicting the night before the Ides and the morning of the fateful day. As well as being the best examples of the culmination of the process of performance experienced by Caesar, these moments of dramatic tension reveal the disintegration of Caesar's public persona, which, after sealing his destiny, is destroyed in order for the real Caesarean self to emerge. Ironically, death becomes Caesar's weapon against the fatal blows; he employs two of his distinctive qualities as means to liberate his spirit – his 'epic' speed, established in the *Commentaries* and maintained in Lucan and historiography, and his irrationality, related to *furor* – a specifically Lucanian trait. The latter undermines the role of rational constancy the performer Caesar enacts in the conspiracy, interestingly, a role reminiscent of the image created by the general in the *Commentaries*.

The apocalyptic storm, raging for a substantial part of the play, is a dramatic event which serves as a powerful portent for future sea-change in the world order. Its

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<sup>264</sup> However, I accept the point made by Stewart (1969:117) that the notion of the two 'Caesars' – the one, expressed by his 'mask' of a popular leader, and the more complex personality underneath, is also hinted by Plutarch whose Caesar is always engaged in an emulation with himself (58).

immediate symbolic significance is open to interpretation and may be considered as an illustration of both the turmoil in the conspirators' minds and the disastrous nature of Caesarean aspiring tyranny. In a conversation with Cicero, Casca reveals the scale of the storm – it is 'a tempest dropping fire', filled with portents some of which Casca had witnessed: a slave with a burning hand, like a torch but 'unscorched' by the fire; a lion in the capitol 'who glazed upon me and went surly by...' (I.3.3-32). The storm is combined with omens, notably recalling these in book 1 of Lucan's *Civil War*, such as comets, meteors, 'savage beasts' who leave their lairs and appear in Rome. The imagery recognizable from Lucan's epic may possibly be considered as one of the few direct influences of the poem in the play, with other supposed sources including Ovid's *Metamorphoses* and Virgil's *Georgics*.<sup>265</sup>

Amidst this monstrous unnatural state of the world, we see Caesar, 'in his nightgown', seemingly less troubled by the storm than by the portents and the nightmares it has brought to Calphurnia. Even though it is still night-time he asks the priests to perform a sacrifice and bring him the 'opinions of success.' However, to his wife's rather surprisingly firm 'you shall not stir out of your house today', he replies:

Caesar shall go forth. The things that threatened me  
 Ne'er looked but on my back: when they shall see

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<sup>265</sup> 'In order to emphasize the importance of augury, Shakespeare elaborates Plutarch's account of the monstrous events before the assassination, borrowing additional details from Ovid and from Marlowe's version of the first Book of Lucan's *Pharsalia*...' (Palmer 1970: 406); on the influence of Ovid and Virgil, see Muir (1971:124-5) who also accepts Lucanian influence possibly through Marlowe's translation, particularly the portents surrounding Caesar's crossing of the Rubicon (the lion in the capitol, eclipse of the moon, 'stars with trains of fire' etc.); however, he notes that Marlowe's version was not yet published when *Julius Caesar* was first performed. The complex symbolism of the storm is discussed by Charney (1961:42-8). Amongst the unnatural events, described by Calphurnia (II.2.19-21), is blood drizzling on the Capitol – Liebler (1995:92) notes that this imagery is borrowed from Plutarch's life of Romulus.

The face of Caesar, they are vanished. (II.2.10-12)

Thus the problem of Shakespeare's Caesar becomes perceptible when he appears in his nightgown, but awkwardly uses the habitual grand third person when addressing his wife. Despite the occurrence of 'me', this is the style instantly recognized both by the other characters and the audience as Caesar's 'public' voice – haughty and kingly, this is his manner of speech used in the previous scene when the dictator is surrounded by the populace and the senators. Since this seems to be Caesar's only voice regardless of the circumstances, it contributes to the perception of the above-mentioned two-dimensionality of character. By depriving him of his public environment and confining him to his house and nightgown, Shakespeare exposes Caesar who is trapped in a theatricalized reality in the creation of which he has also taken part.<sup>266</sup> Ironically, the dramatic genre, naturally granting Caesar's most manifestly performative existence, nevertheless restricts him to a private setting. However, the ability of the audience to gaze even at the most intimate parts of his abode guarantees that Caesar is never really seen in private. Therefore, Shakespeare demonstrates the fundamental theatrical mechanisms of spectatorship which, combined with the meta-theatrical force of the play, illustrate the playwright's elaborate vision of Caesar's political performance.

When Caesar talks of 'Caesar' to Calphurnia, the contrast between private setting and public role accentuates the almost bipolar dimension of his existence, in which he projects himself onto the persona of the dictator whose haughtiness fuels the conspiracy. However, after the above-quoted words of bombast, when his wife suggests that Mark

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<sup>266</sup> This scene with Calphurnia is treated by Bonjour (1958: 9) as '...appealing to the ideal figure of the official and impersonal Caesar who stands [...] above ordinary human condition'.

Antony should inform the Senate that Caesar is unwell and will not attend the session, Caesar surprisingly agrees: ‘Mark Antony shall say I am not well, | And for thy humour I will stay at home’(II.2.56-7). We have seen Caesar similarly stepping in and out of his role in his semi-private dialogue with Antony (I.2.190-213) and the same behaviour will be seen later when he reveals to Decius the real motives of his reluctance to go to the Senate.<sup>267</sup> And yet, Caesar experiences a moment of doubt – whether to stay at home and yield to his wife’s pleas, possibly attracting the scorn of the Senate, or to retain his public majestic appearance and attend to the state affairs. This point marks the strongest contrast between Caesar in the role of the dictator and Caesar the performer – the megalomaniac, defined by his appearances for the public, seems to be troubled by anxiety and hesitation in private. He keeps changing his mind until he finally enters the performance mode and goes ‘onstage’, in other words, to meet the conspirators.

Trapped in the role of the tyrant in a hostile reality, the way for Caesar to impose his own will is to destroy the reality of the conspirators from within; to this end, he accepts to die. Nevertheless, dying in character, as it were, is supported by the emergence of the Lucanian Caesar’s *furor* and *hybris* – a strong emotion, which provides the successful transition from death/performer Caesar to life/real Caesarean spirit.

In its epic, Lucanian, emanation, Caesar’s *furor* is the impetus facilitating his victorious advance and creating the emotional dependence of his followers. Shakespeare’s tragedy, however, is known for the lack of variety in verbal expression and metaphors; the resulting feeling of emotional detachment of Caesar’s character is in

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<sup>267</sup> Palmer (1969: 221) rightly notes that Shakespeare presents Caesar as vulnerable and prone to superstitions in order to create the portrait of the politician, who has assumed the stature of greatness; however, Palmer does not engage in a discussion of the performativity, intrinsic to the tension between public and private existence of the character.

accordance with the part played by Caesar in his performative relationship with the conspirators.<sup>268</sup> This alleged lack of emotion, perhaps reinforced by the notorious third person and the exclusion of mercifulness as a character trait, is essential for the role Caesar casts himself in. In his first two appearances in the scenes taking place before and after the Lupercal, Caesar emerges as monumental and unmovable by passions and fantasies. Almost like the marble statue of himself, seen by Calphurnia in her nightmare, Shakespeare's Caesar professes his firmness – in the famous speech, spoken moments before his demise when the conspirators surround Caesar, pleading for the recall of the banished brother of Metellus Cimber, he exclaims:

I could be well moved if I were you:

If I could pray to move, prayers would move me.

But I am constant as the northern star... (III.1.58-60)

Logically infused by the historicity of the subject, the sense of cool fatalism is also evident in Caesar's utterances, such as: 'what can be avoided whose end is purposed by the mighty gods?' (II.2.27-28). The dictator continues his contemplation of the necessity of death:

[...] It seems to me most strange that men should fear,

Seeing that death, a necessary end,

Will come when it will come. (II.2.35-7)

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<sup>268</sup> Charney (1961:11) claims that Shakespeare expresses his 'Roman style' by 'deliberately limiting his imaginative resources'. On the rhetorical schemes and allusions to Brutus' Attic style in the play, see Martindale (1990:154-8).

The sense of fatalism and the self-professed constancy of Caesar create an allusion to Stoicism, possibly recognizable by the Renaissance audience, familiar with the works of ancient philosophers (most notably Seneca, Epictetus and Cicero) and the contemporary ‘neo-Stoics’, such as Lipsius.<sup>269</sup> This outward adherence to Stoicism becomes essential for Caesar’s performance and its artificiality is reinforced by the fact that historical Caesar has not been affiliated to Stoic ideas – on the contrary, there is a tendency to position him in the Epicurean camp. Therefore, since in Shakespeare’s play, constancy is hardly more than an empty word, when acting and change define everyone’s behaviour, the self-professed Stoic constancy of Caesar may be considered as another manifestation of his performative persona.<sup>270</sup>

Although it is doubtful whether Shakespeare intended to encourage a connection between his vision of Caesar’s performance in his tragedy and the image created by historical Caesar in the *Commentaries*, it is difficult not to observe a peculiar correlation, founded on the depiction of the dictator as resolute and free from emotion. Moreover, similarly to Caesar’s own works, in Shakespeare’s tragedy, emotion and tension build up between the lines and define the Caesarean reality to the point in which the famous self-

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<sup>269</sup> On the dissemination of Stoic ideas in Renaissance England and the availability of ancient and contemporary texts, see Monsarrat (1984) and Chew (1988).

<sup>270</sup> According to Bloom and Jaffa (1964: 105), Caesar is the most complete political man who combines Epicurean realism and Stoic idealism. On the similarities between the Stoic and Epicurean ideas, see Chew (1988) who considers Renaissance Senecanism as blend of Stoic, Neo-Platonic, Epicurean elements (7). Rice (1973:239) treats the tension between Caesar’s Stoic appearance and his superstition as an example of Shakespeare’s adherence to Pyrrhonic doubt of the capability of human judgment. The presence of the Stoic ideas in *Julius Caesar* is rejected by Monsarrat (1984) who asserts that according to Plutarch, Brutus favoured Plato’s sect and historically, Cicero classified Brutus as a follower of The Academy; therefore, to consider that with Brutus’ defeat Shakespeare aims to show the failure of Stoicism would be to take ‘Romanity’ for ‘Stoicism’ (1984:144). The superficial Stoicism of Brutus is exposed by Bloom and Jaffa (1964:102); Martindale (1990:165-6) argues in favour of Shakespeare’s strong interest in Stoicism, even if he does not depict perfect Stoic heroes.

proclaimed constancy in fact becomes the suppression of emotion.<sup>271</sup> Indeed, disregard for unfavourable omens is consistent with historical Caesar's well-known lack of faith in portents. However, it could be argued that he is rationally aware of the enmity, especially on Cassius' part, revealed in his dialogue with Mark Antony: 'Yond Cassius has a lean and hungry look: | He thinks too much: such men are dangerous' (I.2.193-4). Therefore, Caesarean determinism becomes infused with a hint of challenge of fate and death, in which the germs of a *hybristic* attitude not unlike that expressed by Lucanian Caesar can be detected. Although Caesar seems to appear rational, when he decides to go to the capitol in the face of all warnings and omens, he appears to act against all reason. As I have argued in chapter 3, similar disregard for the potential danger of conspiracy is characteristic for the depiction of Caesar in ancient historiography and also leads to the conjecture of his conscious anticipation of assassination.

The importance of speed as a factor for the establishment of the Caesarean epic image is introduced by Caesar himself, subsequently reinforced by Lucan, and rarely contested by the ancient historians. In the previous chapters, I have discussed the significance of the notion of delay, emerging as the only weapon against Caesar. Shakespeare responds to the speed-delay issue by constructing a character whose proclaimed dispassionate constancy in fact disguises a stubborn movement forwards, thus implicitly incorporating Caesar's most celebrated asset. He enriches Caesar's celerity by elevating it to a spiritual, intellectual level in which the impulse of intention becomes the true carrier of swiftness. Accordingly, the notion of delay is once again employed as a weapon against Caesar, albeit peculiarly manifested in the attempts to prevent Caesar

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<sup>271</sup> On the suppression of emotion in the play, see Miles (1996:129-135); Stirling (1969: 217) offers an interesting treatment of Caesar's epileptic fit as Stoic rejection of emotion – in his attempt to numb his feelings, he psychosomatically numbs his body too.



from going to the Senate. It is tempting to see this specific expression of delay as possibly beneficial for Caesar and his overcoming it – as an indication of his imminent doom. However, since Shakespeare’s play aims to demonstrate the power of Caesar’s spirit, only possible to emerge after his physical demise, delay in this case should be treated as once again used against Caesar, regardless of the fact that it is provoked by people concerned with his wellbeing. Appropriately, Caesar reacts against the delay: he ultimately disregards Calphurnia’s pleas and attempts to convince him to postpone his meeting at the Senate; once she fails, Artemidorus enters and gives Caesar a letter revealing the conspiracy. In Plutarch’s narrative, Caesar receives the letter, but, pressed by the crowd, does not manage to read it and dramatically enters the Senate whilst still holding the piece of paper in his hand. In Shakespeare’s version, Caesar, either as a sign of haughtiness or sincere concern for the others’ pleas, proclaims that: ‘What touches us ourself shall be last served’ (III.1.7).<sup>272</sup> Refusing to listen to his wife’s advice and to read Artemidorus’ letter, Caesar goes forth and the closer he is to death, the more accelerated his movement appears to be. Aiming to destroy the conspirators’ reality from the inside, Caesar accepts his role, and immersing himself in it, consents to die.

The inconspicuous existence of speed and irrationality in their modified shape as shadows of performative constancy signify the impending revelation of the real Caesarean spirit. It is defined by *hybris*, not unlike that depicted by Lucan, highlighted in the final appearances of the dictator – he is presented as a megalomaniac with demonic energy, challenging fate and believing that the gods should fear him. Upon learning that the beast that was sacrificed has no heart, Caesar exclaims:

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<sup>272</sup> According to Brower (1971: 229), Caesar’s refusal to read Artemidorus’ letter is a ‘royal answer’; Shakespeare thus depicting a character more noble than Plutarch’s; similar views are expressed by Muir (1971:118) and MacCallum (1967:226-7).

The gods do this in shame of cowardice:  
Caesar should be a beast without a heart  
If he should stay at home today for fear.  
No, Caesar shall not. Danger knows full well  
That Caesar is more dangerous than he.  
We are two lions littered in one day,  
And I the elder and more terrible;  
And Caesar shall go forth. (II.2, 40-50)

And just before suffering the first blow, he notoriously challenges his adversary: ‘Wilt thou lift up Olympus?’ (III.1.75). With the climax of the play approaching, Caesar’s megalomania grows more akin to that of his Lucanian counterpart, revealed in statements such as ‘After the waters of the Rubicon, Caesar | will now halt at no river, not if Ganges prohibit me | with his swollen flood...’ (*Civil War* 2.496-8).<sup>273</sup> Although Caesar is depicted as an emanation of the demonic grandeur exemplified in Lucan, his existence in a performative medium allows for more heightened sense of the theatrical (or meta-theatrical). Within the dramatic context, Caesar is made more aware of his own performance and this has been rightly recognized by commentators who assume that Shakespeare draws on the tradition of historical Caesar’s supposed love for acting.<sup>274</sup> The

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<sup>273</sup> Caesar has assumed a ‘mask of superhuman impersonality’ (Traversi 1963: 22); McNeir (1971:7) holds that towards the end of his life, Shakespeare’s Caesar is portrayed as gradually less sympathetic so that we can (for the moment) agree with the conspirators. According to Simmons (1974: 92-3), the ‘cosmic level’ of Caesar’s speech just before the murder is the point when Senecan rhetoric becomes poetry.

<sup>274</sup> Discussed by Simmons (1974: 90). Although written after Shakespeare’s *Caesar, Apology for Actors* (1612) by Thomas Heywood is a notable example of the idea of the performer Caesar: ‘Julius Caesar himselfe for his pleasure became an actor, being in shape, state, voyce, judgment, and all other occurrents,

confidence of Lucan's epic Caesar leads him to convince himself of his invulnerability. Shakespeare's Caesar is similarly over-confident and if taken at his face value, in the conspirators' world, his confidence remains shallow and unjustified. However, behind his performative 'mask' lies the true profundity of his character – the crucial point of transition from life to afterlife is signalled by this outburst of Lucanian *hybris*, a genuine emotion which substitutes the performative haughty arrogance Caesar has shown in the previous scenes.

So, in the last scenes before his death, Caesar is represented as a fusion of different aspects of his depiction in the *Commentaries*, historiography and Lucan: performance of constancy and stability, reminiscent of Caesarean self-representation, his readiness to face peril and conspiracy, an irrational trait evident in ancient history, and Lucanian *furor*, creating *hybris* in the moments before his demise. This multi-faceted portrayal of Caesar attests to the complexity of Shakespeare's dramaturgy as well as to the stability of the reception of elements defining the character in each of the works.

Moreover, the two qualities, evident in Lucan's treatment of the character – speed and irrationality – which have facilitated Caesar's death, are subsequently transformed into the notions of temporality control and pure emotion; no longer mere aspects of Caesar's character, these qualities are instrumental for the destruction of the existing stage reality and are applied to the conspirators' discredit in the second half of the play.<sup>275</sup>

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exterior and interior, excellent'; he plays *Hercules Furens* in his own theatre and once gets so carried away that he kills one of his servants for real (book 2). This is discussed in Ayres (1910) who rightly notes that the occasion is more appropriate for Nero who had played Hercules.

<sup>275</sup> On the two-partite structure of the play, see Smidt (1989:52), who demonstrates the parallel structure of the two halves of the play, which, although not necessarily deliberate, creates a sense of symmetry. The murder of Caesar was used to divide the text into two separate plays, an attempt made by John Sheffield in 1726? – according to Ayres (1910:185), these 'literary exercises' have suffered 'merited oblivion'.

## **Tragedy is a matter of time/emotion unleashed**

Death enables Caesar to sublimate his two aspects of time control – calendar and history. These are then swept by a temporal, theatrical whirlwind and are simultaneously retrojected to doom the conspiracy and projected into posterity as the actual timeframe of the audience in the shape of the Julian calendar and the European monarchical tradition of the ‘Caesars’.

Ever since the conspiracy gathers momentum, a sense of haste almost to the point of hysteria surrounds the action, and the audience feels that a second of delay may have vital consequences for the outcome of the plot. This is essentially a result of Shakespeare subjecting the conspirators to dramatic time and in doing so, the playwright appears to ‘cooperate’ with Caesar for a temporal attack against the plotters. It is widely acknowledged that the action of the play entails a conflated temporal dimension in which the Lupercalia feast in February 44 BC is seen to coincide with Caesar’s triumph after the victory of Munda – an event which in fact took place four months earlier. Moreover, after the assassination, time races even faster: without indicating the passage of time, Shakespeare shortens Brutus and Cassius’ lifespan drastically by bringing them straight to the battle of Philippi regardless of the fact that the actual battle took place two years after the Ides, in the autumn of 42 BC. Clearly, the manipulation of time is necessary and feasible dramaturgical device; however, in the light of Caesar’s relationship with time,

the subject of this study, I suggest that it acquires a more specific meaning, namely that Shakespeare intentionally places his republicans in a pointless struggle against time.<sup>276</sup>

In historiography, but most notably in Lucan's *Civil War*, Caesar's speed enables him to distort temporal frames and create a new, theatricalized reality to host his quasi-divine personality. Shakespeare's play constructs an image of Rome already in the state of theatricalization which in a transcendental sense results from the victory of Lucan's unstoppable ambitious general. Following the victory in the Civil War, the epic quasi-divine Caesar's control of time is transformed into Caesarean calendar reform. Shakespeare's Romans are officially living in Caesar's time from the beginning of the play, but it is both for them and the audience to evaluate Caesar's power from retrospective. The fact that the conspirators are ignorant of the time points to their inherent rejection of the totality of Caesar's temporal control in the shape of official time-reckoning: in his orchard, Brutus asks Lucius to check the calendar to see whether the next day is the Ides of March (II.1);<sup>277</sup> while the conspirators are gathering at Brutus' house, Cinna and Casca argue from which direction the sun will rise; in the same scene, the famously anachronistic clock strikes three, signifying to the conspirators that it is time to part (II.1.192). Interestingly, when they arrive to meet Caesar and lead him to his demise, surprisingly he also asks what time it is. Although, given the dictator's association with temporality such confusion appears problematic, it can be seen as the outcome of the process of transformation of his *celeritas* into the official temporal frame.

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<sup>276</sup> McAlindon (1991:96-101) discusses the conspirators' futile attack against Caesarean time, which strikes back 'coming round': towards the end of the play, Brutus and Cassius make mistakes because they are too hasty in their conclusions, for example Cassius kills himself without waiting for more reports from the battlefield, which would have confirmed Brutus' initial victory.

<sup>277</sup> Sohmer (1999:78-9) considers the possibility of a printer's error as an explanation of the confusion between 1<sup>st</sup> March and the Ides of March but believes the confusion is deliberate: '[A]t the very moment Brutus commits himself to Caesar's murder he seems to step across an invisible threshold into Caesar's time' (1999:79).

Caesar has undergone a process of self-institutionalization, which, combined with the theatricalization of his persona, has generated twofold results: Caesar's absolute power detaches him from reality, while simultaneously organically binding him to it. In other words, Caesar has overreached himself: he is a mortal man, who already exists as history.<sup>278</sup> In the light of this peculiar complexity of quasi-divine Caesar, his momentary and otherwise insignificant confusion may be taken to reflect the distortion symptomatic of the individual becoming the personification of the state.

The conspirators' tragedy lies in the fact that their reality is destined to clash with Caesar's world, largely conditioned by his control of time – both in terms of the calendar and history itself. This is Caesar's supreme advantage over his enemies and it is embraced by Shakespeare who demonstrates a profound concern with issues of perception of time. By constructing the narrative with the awareness of Caesar's domination of the Western calendar, Shakespeare also opens another, meta-theatrical dimension of the play. Since it is a historical fact that the Caesarean faction was victorious, the audience can experience the revelation that they are living in a temporal reality, hostile to the conspirators, which through the power of the dramatic art projects back in history to confirm itself.<sup>279</sup>

Caesar dies, uttering the most Shakespearean of all Roman lines – 'Et tu, Brute!' (III.1.77)<sup>280</sup> – and with the beginning of the second half of the play Brutus and Cassius face the catastrophic consequence of their overconfidence, whereas Antony and Octavius

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<sup>278</sup> According to McAlindon (1991: 98) Caesar '...refuses to believe that his time of danger has arrived and even claims to be beyond time'; in my view, Shakespeare's Caesar has already positioned himself beyond the perception of time.

<sup>279</sup> Sohmer (1999:60-1) offers an interpretation of the time issues/discrepancies in the play as a reflection of the Gregorian calendar reform in 1582; he also notes that Elizabethan almanacs identified days with the Roman *nones*, *calends* and *ides* (1999:36).

<sup>280</sup> In fact, it has been argued that the line is not Shakespeare's invention (see above, n. 224).

inherit and embody Caesarean power. Caesar's body remains on stage for more than 450 lines after the murder including the scenes of Brutus' speech and Antony's funeral oration, heralding the defeat of the conspirators. In addition, the ghost of Julius appears before the battle at Philippi and presages Brutus and Cassius' defeat and suicide. Victory, in the name of Caesar, belongs to the triumvirate of Mark Antony, Octavius and Lepidus which is already functioning.

Before his demise, Caesar professes his performance of constancy which, with its Stoic undertones, contradicts his manifested irrationality. It is the latter, exemplified by Caesar's challenging of fate despite possible suspicion of the plot against his life, which causes his death; liberating his spirit, irrationality transforms into pure emotion and exercises profound influence over the action of the tragedy. Similarly to the control of temporality, this emotion had existed in a latent form beneath the performative self of Caesar from the very beginning of the narrative, but it is fully revealed in the second half of the play.

The aftermath of the murder brings complete havoc, partially due to the visual impact caused by Brutus' urging his associates to wash their hands in Caesar's blood, a pseudo-sacrificial *act*, proving completely inadequate and exposing the monstrous reality of the deed.<sup>281</sup> With the appearance of Antony, the conspirators steadily lose the grip over their world. Caesar's friend professes his intentions to make peace with them and obtains Brutus' permission to conduct Caesar's funeral. The insincerity of Antony's diplomatic

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<sup>281</sup> In his discussion of Caesar as a scapegoat, Girard (2000:219) treats the uncontrolled spilling of blood as a sign of the corruptness of the ritual and the troubled mindsets of the conspirators. The act of washing their hands in blood is an invention of Shakespeare, which proves influential – for example, it is included in the Nuntio's account of Caesar's murder (not shown on stage) in William Alexander's tragedy *Julius Caesar* (1607) (V. 2.).

efforts is soon exposed by the wild expression of his grief. At the sight of Caesar's corpse, shaken and enraged, Antony prophetically exclaims:

And Caesar's spirit, ranging for revenge,  
With Ate by his side come hot from hell,  
Shall in these confines, with a monarch's voice,  
Cry havoc and let slip the dogs of war...(III.1.271-3)

Although these lines have been compared to a passage from book 1 of Virgil's *Aeneid* with Jupiter predicting *furor impius*, which will eventually bring peace, the immediate effect of the speech creates a peculiarly Lucanian effect.<sup>282</sup> In my analysis of the *Civil War*, I have pointed out the importance of the relationship between epic Caesar and his army which functions almost an extension of himself. In Shakespeare's tragedy, the fanatical soldiers are replaced by the crowd, who, after the assassination are driven to frenzy by Antony, a true 'limb of Caesar' as Brutus calls him. The immediate outcome of the destructive energy, channelled through Antony, is the murder of the innocent poet Cinna, who happens to share his name with a conspirator:

FIRST PLEBEIAN: Tear him to pieces! He's a conspirator.

CINNA: I am Cinna the poet, I am Cinna the poet.

[...]

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<sup>282</sup> Antony's prophecy of civic destruction is recognized as Lucanian-sounding by Miller (2001: 36); on the *furor impius* in the *Aeneid*, see Miola (1983:103-5).



FOURTH PLEBEIAN: It is no matter, his name is Cinna; pluck but his name out of his heart and turn him going. (III.3.26-34)

The circle is complete – epic Caesar is back, his spirit possesses the people and his demonic haste determines the demise of his assassins. The new reality painfully deforms the old one and deprives the conspirators of their performative righteousness. Civil Wars begin again, and this time Caesar would not stop, not until his heir Octavian's victory over Antony at Actium. Brutus' role as a liberator is saturated with irony as he releases Caesar from his corporeal presence on the world stage; once set free, Caesar occupies the only reality fit for his epic ego – history itself.

The appearance of Caesar's ghost demonstrates how the spirit of the autocrat becomes instrumental for the annihilation of the republican ideals of Brutus and can be treated as an allegory for the monarchical/authoritarian system destined to prevail. However, when focusing on the apolitical aspects of the play, the death of Shakespeare's Caesar can also be treated as an apt depiction of the process which the powerful, charismatic leader undergoes in order to become truly immortal for posterity and to create substance to his reality.

The dictator's destructive spirit appears in a visual avatar in Act IV, Scene 3: late at night, the insomniac Brutus is visited by a strange apparition; in the brief encounter that follows, the ethereal being announces that it will appear again at Philippi, where, the audience guesses, the conspirators are to face defeat and suicide. The apparition calls itself 'evil genius', which is how Plutarch refers to it in his *Lives* of both Caesar and

Brutus; Shakespeare, however, labels it ‘ghost of Caesar’.<sup>283</sup> Thus he creates a phantom of an enigmatic nature, a hybrid product of Roman beliefs and Elizabethan revenge tragedy dramaturgy. A degree of uncanny realism, infusing the image of the ghost with meta-theatricality, is added by the conduct of Brutus, who, startled at first, speaks to the spirit bravely and in his typical inquisitive manner:

BRUTUS: Why com'st thou?

GHOST: To tell thee thou shalt see me at Philippi.

BRUTUS: Well; then I shall see the again?

GHOST: Ay, at Philippi. (IV.3.281-4)

The ghost elucidates further Shakespeare's receptiveness to the fundamental performativity of Caesar, who, both in life and death, is entwined in a web of interpretations and challenges the perceptions of Brutus and the audience. The transformation of this particular Roman notion into a distinctively Shakespearean one can be considered as an example of the inter-textual process of interpretation to which the characters and the play itself are subjected; it marks a transition from a cultural and religious concept towards a dramaturgically valid and visually capturing presence. A ‘genius’ – spirit, which according to Roman belief accompanies and influences each

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<sup>283</sup> This is discussed by Thomson (1952): North's translation of Plutarch does not account for the daemon of Caesar; when the evil genius appears to Brutus, North thought he was his ‘bad angel’ after the good one had deserted him, whereas in truth he has only one (evil) daemon. On the other hand, the daemon of Caesar, ‘liberated’ after his death becomes his ghost, seeking revenge – therefore, Shakespeare confused the daemon of Brutus with that of Caesar. According to Pelling (2009), the daimon of Caesar in Plutarch introduces himself as the evil daimon of Brutus; it is remarkable that Shakespeare and Plutarch merge the two apparitions in similar way (271-2). The ghost of Caesar is featured in the anonymous *The Tragedy of Caesar and Pompey* (performed in 1595 and published in 1606) – he appears to Antony and Octavian and reconciles them; he also torments Brutus on the battlefield at Philippi; finally, satisfied, he closes the play.

individual – becomes a powerful ghost heralding Caesar's undying presence in history and drama.

However, the connotations of the blending of Brutus' evil genius with Caesar's ghost is a knowledge reserved only for some members of the audience, aware of the source material; Shakespeare curiously fuses two distinct types of presence, that of the ghost of dead Caesar, with the ancient original, namely the visual manifestation of Brutus' own spirit. This fusion allows for an interconnection between Brutus and Caesar on a spiritual level and betrays the Caesarean aspect in Brutus. Caesar's spirit/ghost appears to show that the attempt of Brutus and Cassius to take their place in history, inexorably related to their emulation of Caesar, will always be accompanied by the ghost, exposing their emulation as a mere fruitless imitation.<sup>284</sup> On the other hand, Antony and Octavius succeed in becoming Caesar's heirs and the embodiment of his will for revenge. Antony, as the chief carrier of Caesarean energy, even demonstrates the benevolence, denied to Caesar by Shakespeare – it is exemplified in the act of pardoning Lucilius, who had been captured while pretending to be Brutus (V.4.26-30). Similarly to other aspects of my analysis, the point of Antony's mercy is to show that the recognition of this dramaturgical decision is available only if one sets the play within the broad, inter-generic context of Caesar's characterization, thus confirming Shakespeare's ability to create complex connotations on different levels of the audience's abilities to engage with his narrative.

Even though Caesar's ghost is only visible to Brutus, its presence is felt throughout the whole second half of the play. Although we only hear Brutus confirming

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<sup>284</sup> Thomson (1952:205) finds the ghost problematic since he is too strong to serve as an extension of the character of Caesar as depicted in the play. Such view threatens to oversimplify the character of Caesar and to reduce it to its outward appearance.

his second encounter with the apparition at the battle of Philippi (V.5.17-19), the air is infested with Caesar's presence. Thus upon seeing dead Cassius and Titinius, Brutus exclaims:

O Julius Caesar, thou art mighty yet!

Thy spirit walks abroad, and turns our Swords

In our own proper Entrails. (V.3.94)

Some commentators accept a direct Lucanian influence, expressed in the lines: '[A]nd of legality conferred on crime we sing, and of a mighty people | attacking its own guts with victorious sword-hand...' (*Civil War* 1.2-3).<sup>285</sup> In the light of my analysis of the Lucanian qualities of Caesar, I support a view of the correlation between the two works – as a pure emotion, the Caesarean spirit is capable of bringing destruction to the conspirators' minds and finally annihilates their bodies.

Shakespeare does not demonstrate the great personal antagonism between Antony and Octavius evident in historical accounts. Despite Octavius' authoritative decisions, for instance the position he wishes to take in the battle line, the lack of conflict between the two Caesareans underlines the power of their revenge union, which is contrasted to the argument between Brutus and Cassius (IV.3). Moreover, while the conspirators succumb to the emotional wave, generated by Caesar, the destructive emotion of revenge of the Caesareans is transformed into coolheaded conduct, with debate on proscriptions and dismissal of the third member of the triumvirate – Lepidus. This tension between emotion

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<sup>285</sup> Thomson (1952:148). However, Thomson remains sceptical and believes the roots of the line are to be found in Plutarch's thoughts. Dilke (1972:94-5) accepts the Lucanian connection: 'it is interesting to find that he [Shakespeare] borrows from the very first lines of the *De Bello Civili*...'.

and rationality is not unlike the fundamentally problematic polarity in Caesar's character. It affects his spirit too and Shakespeare's play offers an insightful reflection on the danger and the inevitable, paradoxical effects of 'institutionalizing' extreme emotion and aggression, while once again subtly reflecting on historical Caesar's self-propagated pragmatism.

Without compromising the traditionally accepted importance of Plutarch as a major source for the play, I therefore conclude that Shakespeare's *Caesar* offers a sophisticated reception of Caesar's image, established in the *Commentaries*, historiography and Lucan's epic. His dramaturgical approach allows for the key notions of speed and irrationality to become important features of Caesar's character, found beneath the performativity of his public persona, largely defined by constancy and lack of emotion. Moreover, the ensuing control of time and the destructive emotion, unleashed by Caesar's death, reflect on the problematic dichotomy of emotion versus reason, evident in Caesar's own self-representation and historiography.

## **Chapter 5: George Chapman's *The Tragedy of Caesar and Pompey*: The Tragedy of Caesar's Delay**

George Chapman's only tragedy with a classical subject matter, *The Tragedy of Caesar and Pompey*, befits the erudition of its author, famous for his Homeric translations and interest in antiquity; nevertheless, it occupies a somewhat ambiguous place in Chapman's career as a playwright. The debates generated by the text focus on two major issues: the first concerns the date of composition, while the second deals with the question whether the play has been performed or, indeed, if it is performable at all. The tragedy attracted its greatest scholarly attention in the first half of the twentieth century until the 1970s; nevertheless, few critical studies focus specifically on the character of Caesar and there is no attempt to evaluate the play in the context of Caesarean scholarship. By presenting Chapman's Caesar in the light of the character's epic-dramatic development across the centuries and genres, this chapter aims to demonstrate the value of Chapman's historical play, which should not be disregarded on the basis of assumed dramaturgical flaws and its fate as an unperformed text. I argue that the play is a unique take on Julius Caesar, reflecting on his historical complexity and harnessing the character's dramaturgical potential.

Since the work is rarely studied or referred to, the chapter begins with a synopsis of the play, followed by an outline of the major issues noted above, namely the date of composition and possible performances, and consideration of Chapman's use of source material. The analysis of Caesar's character consists of two sections, dealing with two specific Caesarean 'progressions' based on the aspects of the character I have identified

and analysed in the previous chapters. As with each case study, the aim is to reveal the extent to which Caesar retains or modifies these inherent qualities.

### **The tragedy – synopsis, sources, issues**

The play begins with Cato, who leads us into the midst of political (and soon-to-be military) struggle between Caesar and Pompey, each aiming to move his army into Italy. The Stoic authoritatively describes Caesar as ‘tyrannous’ and, aiming at peace, proclaims his readiness to defend the Republic even if this implies risking his life in the Senate. Caesar’s first appearance is in a dialogue with Metellus, whilst on their way to the Senate – they plan to support Pompey’s army entering Italy, in order for Caesar to have an excuse for the same action on his part. The meeting at the Senate culminates in the two generals engaging in a verbal duel; Cato is physically threatened by Caesar who, sword in hand, attempts to throw the Stoic into prison. Finally, Pompey declares the war and history is set in motion. Act II begins with a comic scene between the rascal Fronto, and a devil – Ophioneus – which, although it is never followed up, wittily demonstrates the corruptness of the times, as the devil persuades the unhappy Fronto to join him in his evil deeds, on the ground that the times are clearly not fit for the good and virtuous.<sup>286</sup> The rest of the act takes us to Thessaly, in the aftermath of Caesar’s defeat at Dyrrachium; while the general discusses the situation with his lieutenants, the captured Pompeian Vibius appears; Caesar sends him back to Pompey with a peace proposal and

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<sup>286</sup> Fronto’s contemplation of suicide is generally considered as a parody of Cato’s Stoic death (Schwartz (1961), MacLure (1966)); Ingledew (1961:155-6) believes the scene was added later; he also treats the post offered by Ophioneus to Fronto, namely that of ‘a dying censor in Sicily’ as alluding to the position of Edmund Tilney, master of the revels (1579-1610); on images of Caesar’s Civil War and that of Satan, presented in the scene, see Blissett (1957).

remains to ponder over the delay of his troops in Brundisium. In the enemy camp, Cato curbs Pompey's satisfaction at the victory by reminding him he is killing Roman citizens and leaves for Utica to organize the forces in Africa. Pompey greets five kings offering him military support; in the night that follows, Caesar faces a great storm but nevertheless attempts to cross the sea in a small boat, in order to transport his troops from Italy. In Act III, Vibius' offer is suspected of being a stratagem and Pompey, supported by his troops and Brutus, declines it. A soothsayer in Caesar's camp brings him omens of success – a divine flame, 'unlike the elemental fire that burns in household uses' (III.2.22-3), had consumed the sacrificial animal; Caesar is resolved for battle and in Act IV, at the battle of Pharsalus, he defeats Pompey and his allies. Pompey and Demetrius – a man from his entourage – manage to escape and, disguised, head towards Lesbos where Pompey's wife Cornelia is constantly watching the sea for his husband's victorious sails. At the beginning of Act V, she meets the disguised men and after a philosophical debate about goodness and greatness, Pompey reveals himself; supported by his wife, he denounces worldly affairs and converts to Cato's Stoicism. However, his new life is cut short by the assassins who murder him in front of Cornelia's eyes. Meanwhile, Caesar pardons Brutus, who surrenders, and heads toward Utica, to meet and win Cato to his side. However, Caesar's plan fails, as he arrives seconds after Cato has committed suicide (after a lengthy debate and soliloquies regarding the immortality of the soul and the duty to resist tyranny). Pompey's head is presented to Caesar, who duly orders the murderers to be tortured. Despite his attempts to redeem himself by dedicating a magnificent tomb to Cato, Caesar remains, as the argument at the beginning of the play states, 'without his victory victor'.<sup>287</sup>

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<sup>287</sup> All quotations are from Chapman, G. 1910. *The Plays and Poems of G. Chapman, Vol. I The Tragedies*.



The traditional date of composition, provided by T.M. Parrott in his edition of the play, is 1612/3. This dating is problematic, since it assumes a pattern of development of Chapman as a playwright mostly in terms of his Stoic convictions, reflected in his drama. Therefore, scholars have disputed the validity of such a model of evolution of which the fully-developed Stoicism of Cato's character should allegedly serve as an example. Moreover, the Stoic 'value' of the play in philosophical terms has also been challenged.<sup>288</sup> The view that Stoicism, albeit important for Chapman's works, should not be deemed decisive for their reception, is further sustained by the evident mixture of philosophical ideas of Chapman's thought; although fundamentally influenced by Christianity, the poet has been described as 'Platonist in his metaphysic and a Stoic in his ethic'.<sup>289</sup> The heroes of Chapman's tragedies, almost exclusively based on recent French history – Bussy (*The Tragedy of Bussy D'Ambois* – published in 1607), his brother Clermont, protagonist of *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois* (performed in 1611), as well as Byron (*Conspiracy of Charles, Duke of Byron* and *The Tragedy of Charles, Duke of Byron* – performed in 1608), and Chabot (*The Tragedy of Chabot Admiral of France*), are notable for combining heroic qualities whilst also questioning the survival of the hero within the political and social status quo. As a result, Chapman's plays are often analysed in the context of his alleged Stoicism, thus setting his strong characters either as dramatic

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Edited by T.M. Parrott (London: Routledge).

<sup>288</sup> Thus Rees (1954:127): 'it is misleading to think of Chapman's thought or his drama as "developing" toward a more or less complete "Stoicism"'. Monsarrat (1984: 205) maintains that the tragedy is a history and political play, rather than philosophical: '...the most elaborate arguments of acts four and five are alien to Stoicism, and there is no reason to believe that Chapman had any extensive knowledge of this philosophy when he composed it'.

<sup>289</sup> Spivack (1967:160). Spivack also presents an overview of Chapman's early reception (1967:153-6); on the influence of Ficino's Florentine philosophy on Chapman, see MacLure (1966: 33); Monsarrat (1984:189-221) argues that Chapman's works should not be classified as 'Stoic' because they combine numerous elements from other philosophical schools. Detailed accounts on Chapman's Stoic convictions are offered by Presson (1969) and Wieler (1949); Braunmuller (1992:18) warns against the tendency to categorize Chapman all too easily into a Renaissance orthodoxy and points out Chapman's own theory of art, in which poetry alone is the path to eternal truth.

reflections on the aspiring Stoic's human limitations or as more detached intellectual concepts.<sup>290</sup> However, since the aim of this chapter is not to situate the play within the context of Chapman's other works, I will not investigate the degree of Stoicism manifested in each of them in comparison to *Caesar and Pompey*. Although my analysis may refer occasionally to the author's philosophical stance, these references are limited to the general presumption of Chapman's interest and advocacy of the Stoic doctrine.

An earlier date of composition has been suggested, based on a reference to a character in Dekker and Webster's play *Northward Ho*, called Bellamont – a dramatist, working on the classical subject of the Pompey-Caesar conflict. The play was produced in 1605 and the character alludes not only to the classical tragedy, but also to other plays by Chapman, his age and subject interests. If this reference is accepted, then the playwright was working or had already completed a play on Caesar and Pompey as early as 1605 or perhaps even earlier.<sup>291</sup> I believe it is not necessary to elaborate further on the issues of the dating of the play; it would suffice to establish another chronological sequence, important for this study, namely that Chapman's play was written after Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, produced in c.1599. There are no sufficient grounds to presume any specific relationship between the two works, since they deal with completely different periods of the historical Caesar's life and it is difficult to establish a

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<sup>290</sup> On Byron and Bussy representing intellectual concepts, see Ide (1980:13); Ide's analysis of Chapman and Shakespeare's soldier heroes maintains that Chapman's heroic tragedies 'disclose a Neo-Platonic aesthetic' (13); overview of Chapman's characters is offered by Braunmuller (1992:17-31) and Bradbrook (1977: 37-54); for analysis of Chapman's heroes in terms of the degree of their Stoicism, see Monsarrat (1984:190-215), Chew (1988: 240-5).

<sup>291</sup> On the Bellamont – Chapman connection, see the detailed account by Ingledew (1961); Rees (1954:128) discusses Fleay's hypothesis that Chapman may have been the author of the *Seser and Pompey* mentioned by Henslowe under the date November 8th 1594; Rees (1954), Brown (1954) and Crawley (1974) accept the earlier date, or at least allow for the existence of an early text, which may have been completely rewritten around 1612-13. According to Monsarrat (1984:196), the lack of references to Epictetus, whose philosophy Chapman discovered around 1612 (evident in *The Revenge of Bussy D'Ambois* and *Petrarch's Seven Penitentiall Psalms*), is an indication of an earlier date of composition.

meaningful connection between the two characters. However, it is precisely this apparent discontinuity in the development of Caesar's character that evokes interest; moreover, the fact that a number of more historically 'accurate' portrayals of Caesar emerged around and after the production of Shakespeare's play attests to the continual diversity of his dramatic reception as a historical personality.

The idea that the text was actually performed is called into question in Chapman's own dedication of the play's quarto, first published in 1631: 'this martial history...never touched it at the stage'.<sup>292</sup> The 1653 edition states that the play has been performed at the 'Black-fryers'. This claim, together with the existing stage directions, has led to the assumption that the play might have been rehearsed at the Blackfriars, but perhaps never performed; the possibility that it may have been performed after 1631 has also been contested.<sup>293</sup> Since this question remains undetermined, the issue of the *performability* of the play emerges as more relevant to my study, especially in relation to its reception. The popularity of the subject and the text's quick pace compensate for the somewhat heavy wording and even Cato's lengthy monologues do not deprive the play of its performative potential. Moreover, as we shall see below, the ambiguity of Caesar's character lends it a receptiveness and potential for moulding in various psychological shapes, depending on directorial decision. Thus I agree that, although the play was probably never presented, 'it

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<sup>292</sup> Dedication to 'The right honourable, his exceeding good lord, the Earl of Middlesex, &c.' Middlesex was an able financial minister of James I; however, provoking Buckingham's enmity by opposing the war with Spain caused his impeachment and political ruin (Bradbrook 1977: 50-51). According to Bradbrook some parallels between Buckingham and the portrayal of Caesar may be established (51).

<sup>293</sup> Parrott believes the original play was a rehearsal copy which never saw the stage and the alleged performance was a false statement to boost sales; this is supported by the fact that the 1653 edition is identical to the previous (these issues are discussed in Brown (1954) and Wieler (1949)); regarding the problem of stage directions: Brown (1954) claims they are insufficient to make a production text, whereas Spivack (1967) claims they are elaborate.

was written in the tradition of the commercial theatre and should be visualized on its stage'.<sup>294</sup>

Issues such as the lack of clearly defined tragic hero, the inconsistency of the characters of both Pompey and Caesar, the rigidity of Cato's character, and the fragmented, inconclusive scene with Fronto and the devil, have caused the neglect of the play; the text is often bypassed as an example of the minor play of a playwright, whose literary fame is earned exclusively by his translations of Homer. The tragedy is accused of failing to transmit an 'impression of an important and world-changing march of events...'.<sup>295</sup> There are critics, however, who have attempted to bringing the play's importance back into the academic limelight by pointing out that it offers 'fine dramatic moments and raises compelling questions', one in particularly relevant to my study, namely how Caesar sees himself and how the others perceive him.<sup>296</sup>

Similarly to critical discourse on Lucan, the multiplicity of main characters generates the debate regarding the identity of the play's tragic hero. Interestingly, opinions congregate around the characters of Cato (as the ideal Stoic, embodiment of Chapman's personal Stoic-Christian convictions) or Pompey (the troubled soul stuck in a limbo between Cato-ism, and his worldly addiction to power). Given the controversial popularity of the figure of Caesar in the Renaissance, it is peculiar that general critical

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<sup>294</sup> Brown (1954:469). Wieler (1949:158) holds the opposite view: with words taking precedence over action, 'it is obvious that this, like other Chapman tragedies, belongs rather to the study than to the stage'. MacLure (1966: 157) also accuses the playwright of excessive verbal characterization: 'Chapman's persons have no silences; when they cease to speak they cease to exist...'.  
<sup>295</sup> MacLure (1966:152). Brown (1954:468) sees too many inconsistencies in the text, including Caesar's changeable character and excessively big cast. Caesar's inconsistent character is discussed in more detail throughout the chapter.

<sup>296</sup> O'Callaghan (1976:319). Schwartz (1961) is also positive – he believes that general discussion of the play is misguided because it is based on the misconception that Cato is the protagonist whereas Pompey is the true tragic hero; nevertheless he holds that the unity of the play should be sought in the action, not the characters.

opinion defines his role in the play as Chapman's foil to Cato and to certain extent Pompey;<sup>297</sup> since his dramatic function is often considered to be the personification of the *negation* of Stoicism, he emerges as inconsistent and lacking depth. However, I maintain that the importance of Caesar as a character is largely based precisely on inconsistency, a supposed flaw, which does not only aptly reflect on Caesar's image in historiography, but also depicts him as a character with the power to evoke sympathy. The play is unique both in its dramaturgical structure and the portrayal of Caesar – these two aspects are interrelated and are treated simultaneously in the chapter.

Chapman interprets the events of the Civil War by liberally collating the historiographic material to serve his dramatic purpose. His main sources are Plutarch's *Lives* and the playwright accurately represents the major events described by the biographer;<sup>298</sup> however, by introducing details which are not in strict chronological order, he creates a rich narrative, which nevertheless remains coherent and does not compromise historical verisimilitude. The best example of this approach is found at the beginning of the play – the scene taking place in the Senate (supposedly in late 50 BC/early 49 BC) combines elements from various events in Caesar's early career. Cato being threatened with imprisonment is an episode taken from Caesar's consulship back in 59 BC when Cato opposed a land bill unfavourable for the *optimates*.<sup>299</sup> According to Metellus, Pompey's army is required as a prevention of possible re-kindling of the 'yet

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<sup>297</sup> On Caesar and the subject of Civil War, see Blissett (1957) and Jacob (2002); on general reception of Caesar in the Middle Ages and the Renaissance, see Wyke (2007); on the influence of Lucan's Caesar, see Dilke (1972). The identity of the tragic hero in Chapman: according to Wieler (1949) and Schwartz (1961) it is Pompey, Rees (1954) and Spivack (1967) favour Cato. I briefly address the question of the protagonist towards the end of the chapter.

<sup>298</sup> In fact Chapman also used other works by Plutarch, such as *De Fortuna Romanorum* and *De Curiositate* (Rees 1954:134-5; 137; 151); on editions of Plutarch available at the time and Chapman's use of them, see Ingledew (1961) and Ure (1958), whose article argues for Chapman's use of North's Plutarch.

<sup>299</sup> The incident with Cato during Caesar's consulship: Dio (38.1.3), Plutarch (14; also *Cato*), Suetonius (20).

still smoking fire of Catiline's abhorr'd conspiracy' (I.2.36-7). The conspiracy took place back in 63 BC and, in what Cicero considered the pinnacle of his consulship, Rome was saved by the execution of some accomplices and the subsequent death of Catiline himself, on the battlefield.<sup>300</sup> The play, however, refers to a different fate of the imprisoned conspirators: Metellus claims that 'the very chief are left alive, only chastis'd but with a gentle prison' (I.2.38-9). The alternate fates of the conspirators in Chapman's play may not be accidental: according to Sallust, Caesar advocated imprisonment of the conspirators, but Cato's preference – execution – prevailed. Although Chapman does not point out that the conspirators were kept alive thanks to Caesar's insistence, he nevertheless introduces us to a parallel reality, in which Caesar appears to have won the case. Interestingly, Caesar's affiliation with Catiline, suspected in antiquity, is further exemplified by Cato's description of his adversary:

So still where Caesar goes there thrust up head  
Impostors, flatterers, favourites, and bawds,  
Buffoons, intelligencers, select wits,  
Close murderers, mountebanks, and decay'd thieves,  
To gain their baneful lives' reliefs from him... (I.1.24-30)

The depiction of the general as a rogue, followed by a wretched entourage of rascals, is reminiscent of the description of Catiline in Sallust's history and his demonization in Cicero's speeches, and aims to undermine Caesar's image of military heroism and popular appeal.

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<sup>300</sup> On the Catilinian conspiracy, see Cicero's Catilinian speeches and Sallust's *Catiline's War*.

Another notable instance of utilization of the dramatic potential of historical accounts is Chapman's creative manipulation of chronological sequences: according to Plutarch, a palm tree springs out of the pedestal of Caesar's statue in a temple of victory in Tralles to signify the victory at Pharsalus;<sup>301</sup> his account of the event follows the description of the battle. However, Chapman transforms the retrospective into an active factor for Caesarean victory – by delivering the news about the palm-tree before the battle, Crassinius raises the morale of the Caesareans and boosts Caesar's resolution to fight (III.2.57-65). This interference with the causal chain of events transforms an omen, happening without the knowledge of Caesar, into an event instrumental to his success.

Although Chapman relies on Plutarch as a staple source, the tragedy displays Lucanian influence, revealed both in the text and in terms of Caesarean characterization. However, similarly to critical accounts of Shakespeare's *Caesar*, Lucan's importance is undeservedly neglected by the majority of commentators, although some have rightly remarked that the 'satanic splendour' of Chapman's Caesar owes much to Lucan's epic.<sup>302</sup> A passage which has attracted attention is the lion simile, used by the Nuntius to describe Pompey at Dyrrachium (II.2), which relates to a simile describing Caesar in Lucan's poem.<sup>303</sup> The possibility of Chapman using Lucan's entire poem instead of

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<sup>301</sup> Plutarch (47); the episode is narrated also by Cassius Dio (41.61); Ingledew (1961) considers this episode and the spelling of Tralles as Tralleis in particular as pointing to the earliest possible date of composition of the play: Plutarch's *Lives* read 'Trallibus', whereas Amyot/North's spelling is 'Tralles'; however, Chapman's 'Tralleis' derives from an edition of Plutarch in Greek; since there were two Greco-Roman editions – in 1572 and 1599, Ingledew suggests the latter as the earliest possible date of composition of the play.

<sup>302</sup> (MacLure 1966:153). Blissett (1957:225) calls Chapman's Caesar the 'most Lucanic conception of Caesar on the Elizabethan stage'. Although Chapman retains some of Lucan's pessimistic outlook, his approach to the cosmic forces which influenced events is positively medieval; moreover, Chapman displays 'a greater measure of historical falsification than we find in Lucan' (Dilke 1972:87).

<sup>303</sup> Lucan (1.205-212); this issue is discussed in detail by Ingledew (1962) – he objects to Parrott's comments that this is a simile with reference to Chapman's translation of *The Iliad* and no influence from Lucan; Ingledew holds that the play was written in 1605 or 1607 and so Chapman could not have used his own translation of Homer; although Ingledew believes the simile is influenced by Lucan, he doubts that

Marlowe's translation of book 1 is attested by the reference to other events in the epic, such as Cornelia's disturbed sleep, and her standing on the shore, watching for Pompey's ships; this episode is treated by Plutarch differently – Cornelia is informed of her husband's arrival and then goes out to greet him.<sup>304</sup> Most remarkable is the storm scene, in which Caesar, after standing on the shore of the river Anius, decides to embark a small boat to attempt to reach Brundisium and personally lead his relief force across the Adriatic (II.5); in Lucan, this scene marks the highlight of Caesarean self-confidence and *hybris*. The episode takes different shape in Plutarch: Caesar disguises himself as a slave and hides in the boat; when the mariners, frightened by the storm, decide to return to shore, he reveals himself and announces that they should not be afraid as they are carrying Caesar and his fortunes.<sup>305</sup> Utilizing the dramatic potential of the scene, Chapman created a hybrid between the less heroic (albeit proud) general of Plutarch and Lucan's supremely *hybristic* Caesar. Chapman's Caesar also addresses the gods and the world in general, but his soliloquy is less arrogant and most importantly, it takes place on the shore *before* he decides to embark the boat, a dramaturgical decision, which infuses the scene with an air of uncertainty. The scene is discussed in more detail below – this brief comparison aimed to illuminate the importance of Lucanian influence on the dramatization of Caesar, a connection often bypassed by Chapman's critics.<sup>306</sup>

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Chapman used Marlowe's translation – among the discrepancies he notes is Marlowe's translation of 'African lion', which Chapman describes as 'Libyan'.

<sup>304</sup> Pointed out by Ingledew (1962); Cornelia on the shore in Lucan (8.40-51), Plutarch's version: *Pompey* 74.

<sup>305</sup> Lucan (5.504-702), Plutarch (38); Appian (2.150) and Dio (41.46); the episode is not mentioned by Caesar.

<sup>306</sup> Although he discusses the storm scene, Schwartz (1961:148-9) finds no reference to Lucan; according to Ide (1985:262), a minor anticlimactic moment in Plutarch is transformed by Chapman into a 'resonant assertion of natural superiority and a triumph of virtue over Fortune'; however, Ide's discussion bypasses Lucan. Similarly, Lucan is not mentioned in O'Callaghan's (1976) discussion of the different treatment of the episode by Chapman and Plutarch.



Due to the play's subject matter, Chapman's Caesar is very far from Shakespeare's dictator – this is Caesar, who still lives in the uncertain times of contest between Republican champions; he has just thrown the dice, and while the outcome is still unclear, he has not acquired the *status* we see in Shakespeare's play. However, nor is he so uncompromisingly confident as he is in Lucan and the dramaturgical frame created by Chapman has a decisive influence over Caesar's character. In order to elucidate the uniqueness of Chapman's dramaturgy, I shall very briefly consider three major extant contemporary plays on the subject. These are Thomas Kyd's *Cornelia* (1595, a translation of Garnier's play), the anonymous *The Tragedy of Caesar and Pompey*, also known as *Caesar's Revenge*, presented by the students in Oxford (also performed in 1595 and published in 1606), and *Julius Caesar* – a closet drama by William Alexander (1607).<sup>307</sup> The anonymous play covers an impressively long period from Caesar's life – the action commences with the aftermath of Pharsalus, follows events in Egypt, Caesar's death and concludes with Antony and Octavian's revenge at Philippi. Kyd's play begins with Caesar's victory at Pharsalus and the consequences it has for the Pompeians and Caesar, whereas Alexander's work opens with the end of Civil War. Although *Cornelia* ends with the conception of a conspiracy against Caesar, and *Julius Caesar* with the revenge forming in Antony's mind, both conclude with a tribute to Caesar's greatness, notwithstanding that it is condemned by the chorus and characters. All three plays choose an appropriate break in Caesar's life to mark the end of dramatic action – his victory, death, or revenge against his assassins. Regardless of whether these points may be accepted as bringing a sense of closure, the plays do not discredit Caesarean glory and

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<sup>307</sup> The dates I use here of *Caesar's Revenge* and *Julius Caesar* are according to Chernaik (2011); according to the earlier account by Ayres (1910) the plays are dated respectively to 1594 and 1604.

greatness. However, Chapman's play challenges Caesar's supremacy and by undermining a certain crucial quality of his, namely his speed, at the very end of the work, it draws an exceptional portrait of the general, defining the play as an important case study in the development of Caesar's image. Therefore, it is by considering the end of the tragedy that I will begin my analysis of Caesar's complex character.

In act IV, after welcoming Brutus in his ranks, victorious Caesar is determined to meet Cato: '...I'll haste to Utica, and pray | His love may strengthen my success to-day' (IV.4.46-7). However, in the last scene of act V, the general arrives at Utica only to face two deaths he would have wished to prevent – that of Cato and Pompey. Following the victory at Pharsalus, Caesar gradually loses his control of the action: he does not attempt to chase Pompey whose flight from the battlefield ends in a brief reunion with his wife and his treacherous murder; he arrives in Utica virtually minutes after Cato's Stoic spirit has left his body. This is the crucial event, which gives the critics the grounds to see Cato as the dominating presence in the play – the only one who could turn Caesar's victory into defeat. Moreover, Caesar himself seems to confirm the power of Cato's defiant spirit when he bitterly exclaims:

Too late, too late, with all our haste! O Cato,  
All my late conquest, and my life's whole acts,  
Most crown'd, most beautified, are b[*l*]asted all  
With thy grave life's expiring in their scorn. (V.2.179-182)

According to Plutarch, Caesar said he must grudge Cato his death, the way Cato would have grudged the preservation of his life by the victorious general.<sup>308</sup> Since historical Caesar somewhat lacks the dramatic remorse that Cato's death devalues all his achievements, by choosing this scene to end his play, Chapman created an extraordinary portrayal of Caesar in relation to the qualities constituting the subject of my study.<sup>309</sup> I have considered different responses to Caesarean celerity: Lucan attempts to instigate delay as the only way to delay the death of the Republic; Shakespeare 'assists' Caesar by conflating dramaturgical time and thus shortening the lifespan of the conspirators and reinforcing Caesar's control over time and history. However, in the episode of Cato's death, Chapman's Caesar arrives too late, even though in a sense the dramatist is 'assisting' him – by positioning the deaths of Pompey and Cato in immediate sequence he saves Caesar the trouble to go through an Alexandrian and Pontic campaign, and even to deal with the mutiny of his legions in Rome; he also conveniently sends Pompey's Egyptian assassins to Utica. Yet, by congregating the two deaths at the same time, place and most importantly, at the end of the play, Chapman puts his character in a desperate situation, no doubt to demonstrate the validity of the last sentence of his argument – '...without his victory victor'. As a result, Chapman's ending completely jeopardizes the familiar epic progression, fundamental for Caesar's image. The progression speed – omnipresence – quasi-divine – control of time is shattered at its initial level and affects every single step that Caesar usually takes on his way to becoming master of temporality and creating a new reality for the world.

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<sup>308</sup> Plutarch (54)

<sup>309</sup> As Spivack (1967:148) points out, the end of the play and Cornelia's character represent 'Chapman's own adaptation of history for the sake of dramatic effect'.

## The broken progression 1: speed-omnipresence-control of time

What marks the ending of Chapman's play is Caesar's delay, which proves unworthy of his reputation, established in the *Commentaries* and supported by historiography. Indeed, although throughout the play Caesar can hardly be defined as a phlegmatic character, general references to speed and haste are absent and there is certainly no emphasis on Caesarean speed. Caesar's speeches do not relate to the notion of celerity, nor do other characters note his identification with someone possessing incredible speed of action; the only possible allusion to such a connection could be detected in Caesar's boastful speech in the Senate: '...I took in less than ten years' time | By strong assault above eight hundred cities...' (I.2.114-5). A very characteristic example of historical Caesar's speed is the '*Blitzkrieg*' at the beginning of the Civil War – his bold crossing of the Rubicon with a single legion and the subsequent capture of a number of towns. Although Chapman does not present or refer to the act of crossing the border, he nevertheless preserves historical coherence, by presenting the invasion of Caesar as a cause for Pompey's retreat. However, it is notable that Pompey is described by Fronto as retreating out of fear of the size of Caesar's army, not the speed with which he moves through Italy (II.1.84-5). Since Caesar's celerity in the play is hardly remarkable, in the moments when the general shows impatience it does not reinforce the image of efficiency and energy, as, for example in the notable episode in the *African War* 1, when Caesar is seen in his camp on the shores of Lilybaeum, waiting for a favourable weather to set sail. Instead, in the play, impatience stands in uneasy contrast with Caesar's tardiness and as a result emerges as ineffectiveness: impatient to acquire his

troops from Brundisium, Caesar, in what sounds more like a rhetorical question, asks Antony.<sup>310</sup>

How shall I help it? Shall I suffer this

Torment of his delay, and rack suspicions

Worse than assur'd destructions through my thoughts? (II.3.99-101)

Although at this point Chapman's Caesar seems more prone to words, nevertheless, two scenes later he does embark the small boat and eventually proves his capability of action. However, as we shall see below, the events in that storm portray a Caesar distinct from the bold, resolute and swift character who appears in Lucan's version of the scene.

Speed should lead to the next stage of Caesarean progression, namely his characteristic omnipresence, expressed by the ability to challenge temporal boundaries. However, Chapman seems to deny such a privilege to Caesar – the general is not everywhere and we do not see him multitasking as we do in the *Commentaries*, Lucan and historiography. As a result, the validity of Caesar's quasi-divine position is also undermined. Nevertheless, he retains his characteristic ambiguity towards the divine powers and this mindset positions him in opposition to Cato; as the opponent of the fatalistic Stoic, Caesar does not seem to submit entirely to the gods' will and demonstrates the conviction that one is the creator of one's fate. According to Pompey, some have said Fortune is Caesar's page (I.2.167).<sup>311</sup> However, Caesar's attitude appears

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<sup>310</sup> Not that according to historical sources, including Caesar himself, Antony is in charge of the forces in Brundisium at that time.

<sup>311</sup> Pompey himself is engaged in a love-hate relationship with Fortune – although the Stoic in him despises it, he also relies on Fortune in battle and subsequently blames his defeat on it.

distinctly 'historical', in accordance to the general's own writings and historiography – he holds that good fortune is largely determined by one's actions. Moreover, Chapman takes this worldview to the extreme by setting a precedent – for the first time in accounts of Caesar's defeat at Dyrrachium, the general willingly and in a surprisingly human and self-critical way, blames himself for losing control over the situation.<sup>312</sup>

It was not Fortune's fault, but mine, Acilius,  
To give my foe charge, being so near the sea,  
Where well I knew the eminence of his strength,  
And should have driven th' encounter further off... (II.3.10-13)

On the eve of the battle of Pharsalus, Caesar hears the good omen, delivered by Crassinius that in Tralles, in a temple of victory, a palm tree suddenly grew out of the base of the general's statue. He is delighted by the divine grace, but reminds Crassinius that:

Yet will not that, nor all abodes besides  
Of never such kind promise of success  
Perform it without tough acts of our own... (III.2. 68-70)

Thus Chapman, once again utilizing the dramatic potential of his sources, evokes Caesar's speech delivered in the *Civil War Commentaries* – Fortune must be assisted by

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<sup>312</sup> In comparison, in his *Commentaries*, Caesar highlights the unfavourable terrain, instead of his tactical faults; he also notes the potentially perilous overconfidence of his enemy (*Civil War* 3.72) Lucan's Caesar does not ponder over his defeat and eagerly moves the action forward to the battle of Pharsalus (6.314-5).

the efforts of the army and general (III.73). So, Julius, seen through the eyes of jealous Pompey and the ideological enemy Cato as Fortune's darling, in fact appears as a very realistic individual, ready to accept his faults and realizing that success is achieved at the price of hard work.<sup>313</sup> The contrast between the opinions of Caesar's enemies and his own words enables the audience to recognize another perspective from which to evaluate the character; unlike Shakespeare's play, such perspective allows for Caesar's existence independently of the anti-Caesarean position.

The general's attitude towards the divine powers emerges as a fine blend of belief and scepticism, in which the former never reaches Cato's fanatical devotion and the latter is more restrained than in the epic of Lucan, whose Caesar audaciously rivals the gods. A good example is the storm scene, which, although revealing dramaturgical similarities between Lucan and Chapman, clearly differentiates between the two characters. Caesar's speech in the play is not delivered whilst at sea, but on the shore of the river Anius; moreover, unlike his Lucanian counterpart, Caesar is not fascinated by the gods' attempts to destroy him. Instead, he is almost puzzled and agitated by the fact that, after striving '....to form in man the image of the gods' (II.5.13), he is still not elevated to perfection. Indeed, as O'Callaghan (1976) points out, Caesar does seem to believe that his victory is an historical imperative;<sup>314</sup> moreover, given the ambiguity of the outcome of the perilous journey across the Adriatic, O'Callaghan plausibly concludes that in Chapman's play Caesar is in fact successful in transporting the troops. If we accept this conjecture, then Chapman's treatment of the episode marks a departure from historiography and epic altogether. This would be an instance of allowing Caesarean skill and almost supernatural

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<sup>313</sup> The jealousy of Pompey is noted by Schwartz (1961:142) and Crawley (1967:285).

<sup>314</sup> O'Callaghan (1976:325).

power to solve the crisis and a subtle confirmation of his thriving struggle for self-development.<sup>315</sup> Thus interestingly, the storm scene in Chapman sets a less arrogant and *hybristic*, but nevertheless successful Caesar against his demonic Lucanian counterpart who, despite supreme rivalry with the gods, is forced to return to shore. Caesar is not portrayed as deluded into believing in his divinity and seems conscious of his human limitations – he may strive to reach the divine heights, yet his feet remain firmly on the (mortal) ground. His negative aspects may be boastfulness and political shrewdness, but in everything else Caesar's character shows much more constraint in comparison to his Lucanian namesake, and is an ample dramatization of the historical person with his fundamental ambiguity of character.

The apex of Caesar's progression from speed through omnipresence should lead to transcendence and control of ordinary temporality. The previous chapters have explored the realization of this control on two levels, namely historical time and an institutionalization of alternative, Caesarean temporality, expressed by the calendar reform. In both cases, this control is facilitated by the introduction of what I have termed 'virtual' reality, hosting epic-dramatic Caesar. However, similarly to the approach towards speed and omnipresence, no connection between Caesar and time has been established in Chapman's play. This is understandable, given the fact that the action depicts a crucial period of historical Caesar's career in which his power has not reached its peak and ability to exercise a more wide-ranging temporal control; the calendar reform, the act which seals Caesar's relationship with time, is not yet performed. Nevertheless, Caesar of the early 40s BC has already established his mythological origins and has made a successful attempt to introduce the Roman audience to his new reality

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<sup>315</sup> Caesar is associated with the strive towards self-development by Schwartz (1961:148-9).



with the *Gallic Wars*. Moreover, Caesar's ultimate victory in the Civil War will become the basis of another aspect of time control crucial for Caesarean reception – his dominating presence as historical imperative. The end of Lucan's poem is ambiguous, but by structuring his work as a direct response to Caesar's *Commentaries*, Lucan inevitably implies Caesarean victory, albeit with a bitter aftertaste. In the plays, contemporary with Chapman and Shakespeare I have outlined above, the feeling of (Caesarean) historical fatalism is exemplified by concluding the narrative with the actual or imminent defeat of anti-Caesareans. The supreme example, of course, is Shakespeare's tragedy, in which the powerful spirit of the dictator is reincarnated in Antony's fury.

And yet, the feeling that Caesar is victorious in the worldly triumphant sense, or as the spirit that would determine the course of history, is difficult to detect in Chapman's play. Regardless of whether we accept Cato as the righteous victor who deprives Caesar of his claims to glory, the very fact that Caesar arrives too late jeopardizes his chance to end the play with the habitual victory. Thus Chapman, in his opposition to some of the most prominent Caesarean qualities, draws a coherent portrait of his character – speed fails him and as a result, his ability to control the temporal order of the world is compromised.

Distinct from Shakespeare's play, Chapman's work lacks popularity and has not been effective in moulding Caesar's image in a way that influences both art and history; as a result, regardless of the outcome of the tragedy, Caesar will always be victorious in the minds of those familiar with his historical and literary background.<sup>316</sup> Nevertheless,

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<sup>316</sup> '...[D]espite his lack of sympathy for Caesar, Chapman has not distorted the facts of history to make him less a man than he actually was' (Wieler 1949:136); Komarova (2002:220) also holds that although ethically, Chapman is on Cato and Pompey's side, historically, he takes Caesar's side.

the uniqueness of the play lies in its bold attempt to isolate Caesar's life from the historical imperative and the inevitability of his success.

## **The broken progression 2: performativity-theatricality-virtual realities**

Through his control of time, Caesar, as the hero in the *Commentaries* and historiography, succeeds in the creation of a 'virtual' reality, defined by epic and dramatic elements, and imposes it onto the existing world as the new Caesarean reality. However, by contesting his speed and efficiency Chapman also denies Caesar his claim to a totality of power. Therefore, the question that arises is to what extent the denial of control of temporality as means of Caesarean power influences the ends of this power, namely the creation of a new reality for posterity. In order to evaluate this issue, I will focus on the second Caesarean 'progression', in which Caesar defines his relationship with the environment in terms of performativity. As with other instances of the contradictory nature of Caesar (for example, his characteristic duality in historiography), my approach would be to 'test' Caesar for 'symptoms' of self-conscious performativity and theatricality. However, in this respect Chapman's play also proves problematic and, similarly to the traditional Caesarean celerity and its consequences discussed above, performativity and conscious theatricality are not explicitly featured in the play. Nevertheless, Caesar retains one specific means to exercise temporal control over the conquered people in the Civil War, namely his legendary *clementia*; the evaluation of its prominence in Caesar's characterization can shed light on his inherent performativity, which in the case of Chapman's play should be sought between-the-lines.

It would be hardly an exaggeration to claim that the image of Chapman's Caesar is defined by *clementia* and this is often seen as contributing to the inconsistency in the character's portrayal. Some commentators find a discrepancy between the shrewd, Machiavellian Caesar, boasting of his achievements at the beginning of the play, and his subsequent appearance as humane and self-critical. The person who cooperates with Metellus to secure his army command in Italy by cunningly supporting the motion to allow Pompey's troops as well is difficult to reconcile with clement Caesar, ready to take the blame for his failures.<sup>317</sup> I believe this contradiction in Caesar's character is not only evidence for Chapman's dramaturgical skill and interest in representing a credible historical personality, but also a vindication of the character's subtle performativity.

An obvious and conventional way for Caesar to confirm his demonic image, created by Cato, would be to perform an aside, demonstrating his self-conscious projection of evil; however, the audience is never involved in moments of dramatic irony or made accomplice to Caesar's villainy in any way. In other words, if Caesar does possess a demonic nature, he spares no effort to conceal it. Indeed, his first appearance and dialogue with Metellus may be taken as an instance of scheming behaviour, potentially leading to confirmation of villainy. The deviousness of the plan exposes a significant discrepancy between action and intention and reveals Caesar's *modus operandi* as the typical Machiavellian politician. So, Chapman introduces Cato's judgment of Caesar as initially correct and the general is readily seen as a character of dubious political decency. However, as the action of the play progresses, the validity of

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<sup>317</sup> Crawley (1974) believes the inconsistencies of Caesar's character point to re-working of the text; according to Ide (1985:255), Chapman brings didactic uses of history which are resistant to the aesthetic principles of character consistency and organic unity; thus 'Chapman's Caesar epitomizes the complex literary and dramatic tradition of Caesarism in Renaissance. He is cruel and merciful, warmonger and peace-maker, Machiavellian politician and political naïf...' (260).

that first instance of political manoeuvring as a proof for two-faced Caesar becomes doubtful and Caesar emerges as a shrewd politician instead. Suspicions of the insincerity of his peace proposal sent to Pompey after Dyrrachium can be raised on the grounds that following the dispatch of the message Caesar and Antony discuss the necessity to bring the delayed army in Brundisium immediately to Greece. Nevertheless, it seems more likely that the general is doubting Pompey's acceptance of the peace proposal and is therefore eager to receive his relief force; he does not indicate to Antony that he is using the peace proposal entirely as a decoy and claims that he desires 'directly peace' (II.3.83).<sup>318</sup> As Cato gradually fades off from the action, the stage reality is fully occupied by Caesar, whose words and actions challenge his opponent's opinion and who appears rather, albeit suspiciously for some, humane. Moreover, he begins to practice *clementia*, which is sincere insofar as it is never visibly used to deceive nor is it referred to as a tool for political manipulation. Although sparing Vibius' life is necessary since the Pompeian becomes the courier to bring the peace proposal, Vibius is not humiliated; on the contrary, Caesar discusses with him and Antony the current state of affairs. Later, the general welcomes Brutus among his intimates and, despite the hint of royal grace, his kindness remains a stainless gesture of friendship (IV.4.23-47, the passage is discussed in more detail below). A characteristic element in the *Commentaries*, Caesarean *clementia* features only tacitly in Lucan; it is completely omitted by Shakespeare for the sake of exposing the biased enmity of the conspirators. Thus Chapman sets a precedent in the characterization of Caesar: by allowing him his most characteristic asset of self-

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<sup>318</sup> Rees (1954: 135-6) is not convinced by Caesar's sincerity – although he sees the general as somehow more noble than the usual Machiavel, as a man of policy his peace negotiations have hidden agenda; a similar view is expressed by Schwartz (1961). Ide (1985:261) notes that Chapman adheres to the tradition to present naive Caesar juxtaposed to Machiavellian Antony, whereas Crawley (1967: 285) sees Caesar as alternating between the tactics of a Machiavel and a Roman nobleman.

representation, regardless of his Stoic and naturally, anti-Caesarean stance, Chapman stands in defence of Caesar's anti-tyrannical argument. The plays by Chapman's contemporaries, focusing on the Civil War narrative and mentioned above, also reveal to some extent the discrepancy between the negative image of Caesar, created by his enemies, and the real attitude of the character towards Civil War, and his benevolence towards the Pompeians; a good example is Kyd's *Cornelia* – the fact that Caesar does not appear on stage until Act IV allows for diverse opinions about him to be expressed. When Caesar appears, in a dialogue with Antony, he contradicts some of these opinions by revealing his unwillingness to fight the war and, hearing about rumours of conspiracy, he finds it difficult to accept that those he had saved can wish his death (IV.2). However, the importance of Chapman's treatment of Caesarean *clementia* consists in the relationship with performativity and Caesar's use of the third person.

In order to distinguish the performance 'mode' behind Caesar's acts of humaneness, I propose an analysis of the characteristic Caesarean third person, which once again appears as a signifier of his performative self and in effect buttresses the strong union of leniency and performance in his personality. Similarly to other aspects of the Caesarean image, discussed above, the third person has an ambiguous function in the play – it is well calculated and often not used in places we might expect it to appear. In the boastful speech in the Senate (I.2.73-129), as well as his address to the soldiers before Pharsalus, Caesar is 'I' (III.2.109-138). However, when in Act III the soothsayer brings the good omens – celestial fire, sent by Jove himself, terrifying the soldiers in the camp of Pompey – Caesar commends the seer: 'be for ever reverenc'd of Caesar' (III.2.38-

9).<sup>319</sup> It is notable that whenever the occasion evokes the appearance of humane, gentle Caesar, we encounter his third person: the soldier Crassinius, who, on the eve of the battle of Pharsalus, had promised his general that in the ensuing battle he will earn Caesar's gratitude either alive or dead (III.2.78-82), dies on the battlefield. In the midst of the battle, after he appears on stage pursuing Pompey with a sword in hand, Caesar sees his soldier and, heartbroken, delivers a eulogy in which he exclaims: '...death in his broken eyes, which Caesar's hands | Shall do the honour of eternal closure' (IV.2.16-7). The scene is as touching as it is potentially intimidating with its assertion that it is an honour to die for Caesar, and Julius proudly confirming it. However, since Crassinius is present as a character in the *Commentaries*, this scene is also a fine moment of dramatizing history by enriching historical Caesar's image with compassion.<sup>320</sup> Chapman's Caesar is the supreme general, and in his spirit that gives the army its bellicose inspiration, there is a hint of Lucan's Caesar who, like a Valkyrie, flies over the field in the epic poem. And yet, he can easily express compassion and grief towards his subordinates – potentially a commonplace reaction, void of sincere feeling, it can equally be accepted as a moment of real pain.

Each time *clementia* is to be demonstrated, Caesar readily and skilfully switches to his third person; without doubt, the most exemplary act of clemency is the welcoming of Brutus amongst the Caesarean ranks after the Pompeians' defeat at Pharsalus. At the

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<sup>319</sup> According to Wieler (1949: 139), Caesar's faith in soothsayers' predictions is a sign of his negation of Stoicism.

<sup>320</sup> Caesar grants his centurion Crastinus – a recalled veteran from the celebrated 10<sup>th</sup> legion – a similar, even longer speech (*Civil War*, 3.91); he dies heroically by a sword thrust in the face and earns Caesar's commendation (3.99). Lucan curses Crastinus, because he is the one who, by throwing his spear first, initiates the fight (7.469-475); later historiographers name the centurion Crassinius – Plutarch follows Caesar's account even to the description of the centurion's death (44); Appian (2.82) offers a sketchier version, albeit truthful to the preceding accounts.

point when Caesar expresses his fear for the loss of Brutus' precious life, the young man appears in the aftermath of the battle; he submits to the victor and admits:

Sir, I fought

Against your conquest and yourself, and merit

(I must acknowledge) a much sterner welcome. (IV.4.23-25)

Caesar replies with a speech in the best canon of his performative manifestation of kindness:

You fought with me, sir, for I know your arms

Were taken for your country, not for Pompey.

And for my country I fought, nothing less

Than he, or both the mighty-stomach's Consuls;

Both whom, I hear, have slain themselves before

They would enjoy life in the good of Caesar. (IV.4.26-31)

.....

Only requite me, Brutus; love but Caesar,

And be in all the powers of Caesar, Caesar. (IV.4.43-4)

The institution 'Caesar' is already creeping in, with Julius projecting his cognomen as the instrument of his power to bestow benefactions. Indeed, the use of the third person is not emphasized through haughty behaviour as in Shakespeare's play. Nevertheless, its

seemingly sporadic uses act as an almost subliminal message that Caesar is not ‘himself’ when he spares people’s lives. Thus Chapman conforms to historiographers’ doubts that Caesarean benevolence may be, after all, a political strategy, not his personal desire to save lives.<sup>321</sup> It is difficult to treat this speech as a straightforward declaration of friendship – although it begins with positioning Brutus on the same side with Caesar, the fact that the two consuls have preferred death to ‘life in the good of Caesar’ introduces another point of view for Brutus to consider; the possibility that death may be a better alternative becomes more plausible when Julius sets his imperative – ‘love but Caesar’. However, despite the subtly menacing message, nowhere in the action of the play would Caesar deviate from his first assertion that he is on the same side as Brutus. This passage is exemplary of the whole problematic of the play, particularly important for the character of Caesar, namely the tension between words and action. Cato’s words, describing the general and Caesar’s own words seemingly tainted by the enormous ego of a potential tyrant, are constantly challenged by the actions of the man who pardons people, and unlike Lucan’s Caesar does not revel (and feast!) in the sight of carnage.<sup>322</sup>

Two additional episodes, in which Caesar uses the third person, are worth pointing out – these stand out as almost literally adopted by Chapman from his historical sources. Firstly, Caesar’s remark to the captured Pompeian Vibius who had shown too much zeal in the battle at Dyrrachium:

...for had your general join’d

In your addression, or known how to conquer,

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<sup>321</sup> On interpretations of Caesar’s benevolence in his own time, see above, n.104; 210.

<sup>322</sup> ‘...a place for feasting | Is prepared from where he can discern the faces and the features | Of the dead. (Lucan, 7.792-4).



This day had prov'd him the supreme of Caesar. (II.3.29-31)

Later, at the end of act II, Caesar addresses the sailor whose boat he embarks in his mission to reach Brundisium: 'Launch, man, and all thy fear' freight disavow; | Thou carriest Caesar and his fortunes now' (II.5.44-5). Both instances, recognizable as the 'quotable Caesar' lore, are presented by Plutarch and other historians.<sup>323</sup> However, none of the historiographic accounts of the first episode present Caesar referring to himself – he claims that the enemy would have been victorious if they had been led by someone who knew how to conquer. In Chapman's version, this statement stands out as perhaps the only use of third person not connected directly to the general's benevolent nature. The second example retains the image of Caesar, who, distanced from himself, proclaims the greatness of 'Caesar' whose name is the embodiment of power. The different treatment of two Caesarean statements, directly appropriated from the sources, demonstrates Chapman's flexible dramaturgical adaptation of his source material and his attempt to expand the scope of Caesarean name-institutionalization beyond *clementia*. The final example concerns the notable storm scene; in what seems to be Caesar's only soliloquy, whilst standing on the shore of the river Anius before embarking the small boat, he refers to himself in third person twice. First he says:

'The wrathful tempest of the angry night...

....

Hath rous'd the Furies, arm'd in all their horrors,

Up to the envious seas, in spite of Caesar.' (II.5.1-6)

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<sup>323</sup> Plutarch (39), Appian (2.63), Suetonius (36).

In Lucan's epic, Caesar begins the speech when already at sea – he confronts the storm, which he recognizes as gods' attempt to destroy him. Chapman places the character on the shore, uttering his soliloquy as a way to convince himself in the necessity of action. Chapman's Caesar appears more vulnerable and this is clearly noticeable in the way he perceives his relationship with the Furies: they are not impressed by the name, on the contrary, they act *in spite of Caesar* and he realizes it. This statement is in contrast to the importance of the name as a signifier of power in Shakespeare, whose Caesar tends to emphasize his name in a grand, almost Senecan manner. We encounter the third person again, five lines later and it is important that this is immediately followed by the first person:

...the gods have stroke

Their four digestions from thy ghastly chaos,

...

By the necessity of fate for Caesar'.

I, that have ransack'd all the world for worth

To form in man the image of the gods,

Must like them have the power to check the worst

Of all things under their celestial empire... (II.5.8-15)

Lucan's Caesar, delighted at heaven's efforts aimed at his destruction, consciously challenges the gods to strike him if that is their wish – he will disappear in the midst of

the storm and would be always expected, always feared.<sup>324</sup> The *hybris* of Chapman's Caesar is more convoluted – with the absence of irrational emotional outbursts, it is more restrained and shows an almost polemic attitude towards the divine. This is as close as Caesar can get to a prayer – it is a proud address stating Caesar's mission: to elevate his human mind and being to the level of the divine with conquests and great achievements.<sup>325</sup> It is an enormous task, the completion of which should set Caesar on equal grounds with the gods. It is beyond his comprehension that such accomplishments could not lead to success. Thus the successive use of the third and first person unites the two aspects of Caesar's duality: it is a sublime moment of unification in which the fate of the public, benevolent Caesar is determined by the subjective 'I' of the man whose conquests have changed the world.

The above examples aptly illustrate the complex use of the self-referential third person in Chapman's play. Its predominance in situations when Caesar shows *clementia* and gentleness signify his endeavours to separate himself from his own ambitious personality and as a result becomes the strongest performative tool of the character. However, by not explicitly drawing the audience's attention to his self-conscious performativity (that is, of *clementia*) and the carefully selected uses of third person, Caesar emerges as a very naturalistic character; consequently, the audience can easily be convinced that if it is the case that Caesar performs himself, he clearly performs his good self. The Caesarean enigma remains, supported by the ambiguity of his 'true' self and the lack of proper division between real Caesar and his 'public' persona. Since Chapman does not offer proof for Caesar's villainy, for the audience he remains someone with

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<sup>324</sup> '...No need have I | Of burial, O gods: keep my mangled corpse | In the billows' midst: let me be without a tomb and pyre, | Provided that I am always feared, by every land awaited' (Lucan 5.668-671).

<sup>325</sup> Rees (1954:139) interprets Caesar's prayer as an opportunity to boast about himself.

possibly dubious political integrity, but nevertheless acting humanely. Indeed, we are left to ponder over the question if/when the true intentions of Caesar will ever be revealed, but within the action of the play we have no reason for concern – he would spare even his enemies; if we wish to believe in evil Caesar, we must take Cato's words for it.

As discussed earlier in this chapter, the so-called 'progressions' essential for the development of Caesar's image in his own works, as well as in history and epic are re-defined by Chapman – new limits are set and Caesar confronts his own lack of speed, omnipresence and submission, albeit partial and proud, to the gods. Nevertheless, he retains his ability to initiate people in the world of 'Caesar' – these are the 'victims' of *clementia*, whose cherished lives are like glowing embers of Caesarean power. The aim of 'pre-Chapman' Caesar is to activate his new world by employing epic and dramatic elements to define himself in heroic terms: his *Commentaries* set the agenda, historiography confirms it to great extent; futile, even if frantic resistance to the new reality, is offered by Lucan as the poet who invades the narrative to accuse Caesar for the death of the Republic; in Shakespeare, the power of Caesar to create a complex reality and to play the leading part in it meets the opposition of the Senate – the conspirators engage Caesar in a rival reality exposing his potential tyranny, which he enters and destroys from within. In Chapman's play, the conflict of realities and worldviews is evident as well – this time it is epitomized by Cato the Stoic versus Caesar, who may be taken to personify a complex blend of the non-Stoic ideas.<sup>326</sup> The conflict between the

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<sup>326</sup> Although not particularly emphasized in the play, Caesar's broad relation to Epicureanism which I have referred to in previous chapters may be taken into account. On Caesar, characterized by trust in his own natural powers not in god, opposed to Cato and to some extent Pompey, see Rees (1954:135-6). A possible connection between Caesar and the idea of the 'active man' may be suggested – the power seeking 'active man' is considered in the context of Chapman's poetry and in particular *The Tears of Peace* as amongst the enemies of learning (McLure 1966:75).

two characters haunts the play from the very beginning when Cato's Stoic principles oppose Caesar's political manoeuvrings in the Senate. In Act II, Cato leaves Pompey and departs to Utica, thus disappearing from the action until it moves to Africa in the last scene of Act IV.<sup>327</sup> When we see him in Utica, we witness Cato's philosophical reasoning in favour of suicide as means of resisting the ensuing tyranny of Caesar; he performs his act of defiance and as a result brings the play to an end before the eyes of dismayed Caesar, frustrated by his own delay. By jeopardizing Caesar's speed, which is instrumental in Cato's death, the ending casts a shadow on the magnitude of Caesarean power and defines the conflict of realities in the play. The conflict between Cato and Caesar can also be assessed as a complicated game of reason and emotions, the results of which challenge Chapman's alleged ideological stance as a playwright, favouring Cato as the protagonist of the tragedy.

It is important that in order to proclaim the power of Stoicism, the message traditionally accepted by the critics, the play should rely on the presumption of an already established Stoic standpoint on the spectator's part. For an unbiased spectator (hypothetically conceived), Caesar's behaviour may appear a healthy equilibrium between reason and irrationality. Furthermore, in case the spectator does not share the Stoic viewpoint, introduced by Chapman, one might not find it easy to be convinced by Cato – apart from his unquestionably noble intentions behind his suicide, his philosophy is never put to trial in governing the state.<sup>328</sup> Cato positions himself as the epitome of

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<sup>327</sup> Cato's 'disappearance' from the action is discussed in Crowley (1967:278) who, contra Parrott, does not find it problematic, because Cato is 'a touchstone rather than a "central figure"'.  
<sup>328</sup> Ide (1985) believes that in Cato the didactic function takes over characterization: his inconsistency makes him unfit for success in the active life – at first he is aggressive towards the Catilinians, later he advocates ceasefire which ruins Pompey's chance of success. Caesar's humane behaviour undermines the positions of Cato and Pompey and exposes their speeches as empty rhetoric; Cato's suicide is heroic achievement only in his own eyes (Komarova 2002:222).

philosophical reason which, by subduing the feelings, would overcome fear and die triumphant, depriving the tyrant Caesar of his victory. However, his defiant attitude towards Caesarean power is saturated by strong emotions. Cato opens the play with a description of Caesar which notably recalls the portrayal of Catiline, the conspirator who, in Cicero's speeches and Sallust's history, is a personification of vice – he is immoral, disregards the law, and acts as a magnet to all depraved members of society. Although Cato does not refer to Caesar's emotions, by projecting the 'Catilinian' image onto him, he implies a sense of irrationality which should be seen lurking behind the general's feigned Roman *virtus*. This is further supported later when Cato exclaims that he prefers to make a beast his second father than to accept Caesar as his master (IV, 5.44). Similar sentiments are expressed by Pompey as well: when he dismisses Caesar's peace proposal, he claims he would rather take hell mouth for his sanctuary (III.1.102-105). Therefore, Cato emerges as someone of quick temper and his angry outbursts threaten to transform his defence of the state into a personal attack against the victorious general. In addition, he is possessed by a desire for theatrical self-glorifying death. He is no Brutus who can make a compromise, and by accepting Caesar's benevolence could then obtain the means and opportunity to destroy the tyrant and restore the Republic. Cato's mind is too proud and dramatic to procrastinate and he reacts on the spur of the moment; it could be argued that such reaction betrays a rather emotional personality, lacking the capacity to assess the situation strategically and in result remaining politically short-sighted. Indeed, Cato's behaviour may be taken to reflect a fundamental tension of Stoic thought – remaining emotionally detached, whilst taking active part in political life.<sup>329</sup> Cato's attempt to fight

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<sup>329</sup> Duty is a key term for Roman stoicism – it necessitates active public life instead of withdrawal from it, encouraged by the Epicurean philosophy (Chew (1988: 9), Monsarrat (1984: 17)); the existing divide in

against Caesar succeeds in his self-inflicted mortal blow, which re-defines all Caesarean assets of temporal control. Yet by failing to completely disguise his emotions, Cato's theatrical death overshadows the philosophical reason behind it. As a character, Cato epitomizes the uncertainty of reason as an objective notion and the issue of the place of emotions in Stoicism. Moreover, Cato's Stoicism, particularly in relation to his attitude towards suicide and the immortality of the soul is, to some extent, at variance with the classical Stoic ideas and incorporates some Christian elements,<sup>330</sup> since Stoicism is generally better accepted by Catholicism than Protestantism, there may be grounds for speculation that as Cato's enemy, some Protestant traits in the depiction of Caesar should be sought.<sup>331</sup> However, seeing the conflict between Cato and Caesar in terms of the Catholic-Protestant schism in Early Modern England will generate a new level of complexity in the reception of the play, the discussion of which will be beyond the scope of this chapter. Such a hypothesis would necessarily involve a consideration of the figure of Chapman as a Christian and Stoic. I have already pointed out the diverse philosophical influences in Chapman's thought; in the light of this heterogeneity, I abstain from

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Stoicism between self-sufficient individuals and self-sacrificing patriots was bridged by Panaetius from Rhodes, whose work Cicero translated as *De Officiis*, very popular in Renaissance England (Chew 1988:7-8; Monsarrat 1984: 29).

<sup>330</sup> Since Cato believes in resurrection, he emerges as an embodiment of Chapman's acceptance of the Renaissance Christian-Stoic philosophy; however, it should be pointed out that the issues of suicide and life after death in ancient Stoicism find different treatment in Seneca and Epictetus: according to Seneca, suicide leads to liberty and he allows the possibility of life after death; Epictetus never mentions Cato and holds that man must wait for a divine command before taking his life and that death leads to a return to the elements (Monsarrat 1984: 202); Monsarrat also points out the connection between Cato's belief in the immortality of the soul and Ficino's teleology of nature and the blending of Neoplatonic and Christian ideas (the resurrection of the body) (204). On the ambiguity of emotions in Stoicism, see Braund and Gill (1997); on emotions in relation to Christianity reflected in Renaissance tragedy, see Braden (1985); on the subject with reflection on Chapman, see Wieler (1949); Rees (1954) discusses Chapman's concern with the eternal struggle between reason and passion, evident from his earliest poems (e.g. *Shadow of Night* (1594), *The Tears of Peace* (1609)).

<sup>331</sup> Although the revival of Stoicism should not be seen as a Catholic phenomenon, there is stronger opposition to Stoicism from protestants; in his *Institutes*, Calvin accepts some Stoic ideas, but fate and providence remain a problem, because for the Christians god created providence and is not subject to fate; moreover, Calvin does not accept the Stoic rejection of emotions – humans should be able to suffer (Monsarrat 1984: 73).

suggesting definitive links between his adherence to ancient Stoic philosophy and Catholicism revealed in the play. Cato embodies inconsistency of character not unlike that of Caesar, and the unwillingness to accept it defines him as a less sympathetic individual. On the other hand, Caesar's performativity, giving rise to accusations of inconsistency of character, is exposed as a sign of his inherent flexibility, which may be accepted as a positive substitute for the legendary speed. Therefore, although a villain and Cato's foil, Caesar is not demonized by Chapman and thus his depiction should not be taken to signify an anti-Protestant stance. However, since the positive attitude towards Caesar remains ambiguous, any pro-Protestant associations with the character should be treated with caution.

Caesar's relationship with emotion is integral to my study; in the *Commentaries*, he does not spare an effort to depict his enemies as irrational in order to emphasize his rationality; Lucan depicts his general as a complete negation of Caesar's self-proclaimed reason and benevolence; Shakespeare's Caesar channels his Lucanian *furor* through Antony who becomes the avenging spirit. In *The Tragedy of Caesar and Pompey*, benevolent, bold emotion helps Caesar to achieve a sense of balance in his personality – indeed, he may recklessly embark on the small boat, but that does appear equally irrational and heroic, almost an act of self-sacrifice for the sake of victory. The episode presents an active individual, who does not merely blame his subordinates for the delay, but attempts to combat delay with action. *Clementia* is Caesar's masterstroke to preserve the equilibrium. It is a reasonable act to save people's lives, especially since they would be welcomed as subjects of the Caesarean state; however, showing leniency is also a sign of experiencing emotion: even in the case of applying the policy of mercy, this involves



an ability to restrain the hatred towards those who had fought against him. Moreover, with his overall behaviour in the play, clement Caesar evokes our sympathy, which can never be completely tainted by suspicions of his cynical policy – in other words, actions outweigh intentions, the corruptness of which remains unjustified.

Unlike his Shakespearean namesake, Chapman's Caesar does not adopt the Stoic pose, but remains more truthful to his nature as presented in historiography. Furthermore, by depriving Caesar of his supernatural speed and control of time, the dramatist portrays the Caesarean enigma as an all-too-human inconsistency of character, enriching the dramatic narrative. Caesar's flexibility inevitably opposes Cato's unfulfilled stability and Stoic denial of emotions. Cato (to some extent acting as the voice of the playwright) denies Caesar his speed, but is unable to influence his *clementia*. As a result, not unlike Lucan's inability to resist the love-hate relationship with his demonic conqueror of the world, Chapman's audience is captured by Caesar's unexpected humanity.<sup>332</sup> Ironically, it is the contrast between expectation and fulfilment which Cato creates with his description of Caesar and the subsequent behaviour of the general, which gives him his appeal. Moreover, the image of clement Caesar undermines the power of Cato, whose suicide transforms him into a victim of his own Stoic demons. The two consuls, who also commit suicide contrary to historical accounts, are accused by Caesar of forging a tyrant to justify their slaughters (IV.4.5-7). The death of his enemies should expose Caesar as a criminal, and yet his behaviour creates the image of a successful leader, who is a victim of libellous conspiracy aimed at his personal discredit. The flexibility of action and mind defines Caesar as credible and coherent character, as 'human' as Pompey, whose troubled

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<sup>332</sup> O'Callaghan (1976: 320) sees Caesar's criminal intentions as 'ambition masquerading as duty' and recognizes that by legal standard Cato is correct; however, he admits that not everyone can see through Cato's eyes and Caesar appeals strongly on an almost romantic level.

evolution from the worldly, vain man to an acceptance of ‘Cato-ism’ often makes him the critics’ favourite candidate for tragic hero of the play.<sup>333</sup>

When considered as a complete entity, isolated from its literary and historical (Caesarean) background, it is difficult to see the play as a tragedy for Caesar – albeit to bitter victory, he survives and leaves the play as powerful as ever; even though he mourns Cato’s death, his ideals are hardly shattered; he is not subject to real *peripeteia*, with the possible exception of his initial defeat at Dyrrachium, which is followed by victory at Pharsalus. It is Pompey whose life and death are more suitable to be deemed tragic; his troubled state could more easily evoke pity and fear – the contrast between his wretchedness on one hand, and Caesar and Cato’s superiority – each with their own worldview – on the other, confirms his significance as a tragic hero. However, when evaluated in the larger context of the development of Caesar as a character – from self-representation, through history, epic and in drama – the play presents a unique view of Caesar, which may contain nuances of tragedy: the general is victorious, but Chapman shows that his speed and omnipresence are destined to remain subject to human limitations. Although these nuances are clearly insufficient to bring a decisive defeat to the Caesarean spirit, this tragedy of Caesar’s delay presents the Roman general in a new

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<sup>333</sup> On tragic hero favourites, see above, n.297; Crawley (1967:285) holds that Pompey is the most sympathetic character, whereas Caesar is ‘obviously ambiguous, puzzling, and even contradictory character...’; according to Wieler (1949), by failing to produce the Stoical man Pompey, Chapman has in fact created the only portrait of a Stoical man that our human understanding can accept (147); however ‘[I]n Caesar, Chapman has portrayed the only man in all the tragedies who achieves heroic stature despite his almost complete independence of Stoic ethics’ (140); MacLure (1966) grants Pompey a central position with Caesar and Cato seen in morality terms as good and bad angels contesting for his soul (152).

light, in which, dispossessed of his elemental qualities, he has to struggle to establish his dominion.<sup>334</sup>

In conclusion, Caesar's alleged inconsistency of character in fact attests to Chapman's heightened understanding of the inherent flexibility of the reception of Caesar. The temporal framework of the play is extraordinary – no other dramatization ends at the point of Caesar's arrival in Utica, too late to save (and pardon) Cato. With its emphasis on Cato's suicide as Caesarean defeat, the ending attempts to subvert Caesarean victory and to question the righteousness of his power. This attitude is sustained throughout the text and demonstrated in the constant challenging of the two typical interrelated Caesarean progressions, namely the one founded on his speed and leading to control of time, the other employing performativity as means to bring substance to the new temporal reality. Nevertheless, *clementia* remains Caesar's powerful, performative way to influence people's lives; by not showing any hints of its conscious utilization as political strategy, the benevolence of Chapman's Caesar remains suspicious only to Cato's partisans. Unlike Shakespeare's play, in which Caesar undermines the conspirators' virtual world and as a result successfully replaces it with his own true reality, Chapman's tragedy demonstrates the possibility of multiple realities: although the dramatist may attempt to undermine Caesar's reality, he nevertheless allows for its existence, not only because Caesar's behaviour earns our sympathy but also due to the historical inescapability of his subject matter.

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<sup>334</sup> Thus Ide (1985:261): 'Chapman's most telling contribution to Caesarian tradition is his depiction of Caesar's colossal *virtu*'. Schwartz (1961:142) praises Chapman for his 'subtle and brilliant characterization of Caesar'.

## Chapter 6: The Existential Visions of a Superman:

### Internalizing Caesar's Epic Experience in G.B. Shaw's *Caesar and Cleopatra*

*Caesar and Cleopatra* received its first, so-called 'copyright', performance at the Theatre Royal in Newcastle in March 1899; it was published in 1901 in *Three Plays for Puritans* together with *The Devil's Disciple* and *Captain Brassbound's Conversion*. The first professional production took place in Berlin in 1906, followed by a performance in New York. The German premiere was produced by Max Reinhardt, who could adequately present the elaborate staging and set essential for the play. In 1907 *Caesar and Cleopatra* opened in Leeds and in November it finally reached its London audience at the Savoy theatre. The play was initially written with the part of Caesar designated for Sir Johnston Forbes-Robertson, who performed at the London premiere.<sup>335</sup> The text was subjected to some alterations in the course of its performance history – in the first production, due to its length, Act III was omitted. However, it was restored when a new, shorter prologue, spoken by the god Ra, was introduced in 1912 to replace the original prologue, taking place at the Syrian-Egyptian border and featuring soldiers providing an introduction to Caesar's imminent arrival in Egypt. Notwithstanding its originality as a

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<sup>335</sup> Shaw began writing *Caesar and Cleopatra* in April 1898 and finished it in December 1898; his letters during that time indicate his frequent dissatisfaction with the progress; later however, although realizing its weaknesses, he proclaimed his intention 'to give his audience a character in the heroic mold' (Vesonder 1978:72). In the copyright performance, Mrs. Patrick Campbell performed Cleopatra (she was Shaw's choice for the role) and Nutcombe Gould played Caesar (Couchman 1970: 79); the early performance history of the play is also briefly noted by Meisel (1963: 361), Gibbs (1983:112) and Valency (1973: 171).

view of history and its relevance for the present, as well as providing a useful background information about the war between Caesar and Pompey, the original prologue (now known as an alternative to the prologue), is rightly considered not only as a more appealing piece of theatre but also as integral to the dramaturgy of the play. Since it is not my aim to discuss the performance history of the play, my analysis considers both the new, the original prologue, and Act III. However, we should be aware of the different impact of the two prologues and in particular of the association of the Ra prologue with the authorial intervention in the play and the topical allusions to the British invasion of Egypt.<sup>336</sup>

*Caesar and Cleopatra* depicts Julius' arrival in Egypt in pursuit of Pompey, his military exploits, most notably the capture of the Pharos lighthouse and, of course, his liaison with Cleopatra, which takes the shape of Platonic tutor-disciple relationship. The action of the play broadly follows the storyline, presented by ancient history and indeed by Theodor Mommsen's *Römische Geschichte*, published between 1854 and 1856 – a work famously proclaiming the greatness of Caesar and extensively consulted by Shaw. The play includes Cleopatra's legendary appearance wrapped in a rug, the characters of Pothinus, Achillas and young Ptolemy, as well as Cleopatra being successfully installed on the Egyptian throne. Neither Caesar's amorous affair with the young queen or the imminent continuation of the Civil War is presented in the play. Cleopatra is characteristically younger than her historical counterpart – the sixteen-year-old queen is

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<sup>336</sup> Woodbridge (1963: 52) considers the 1912 Ra prologue a failure because its rhetoric spoils Caesar's address to the sphinx, taking place immediately after the prologue; Dukore (1973) discusses the meaning of both prologues and evaluates the necessity of Act III – he concludes that the palace scene is superior to the Ra prologue; the palace scene is also favoured by Couchman (1973). According to Crompton (1971:62), the Roman-English parallels behind the Ra prologue are influenced by Warde Fowler's pro-Caesarean *Julius Caesar and the Foundation of the Roman Imperial System*.

first seen hiding between the paws of a sphinx, frightened by the imminent arrival of the Romans led by Caesar. The relationship between Caesar and Cleopatra is one between teacher and pupil, with Caesar instructing Cleopatra in the ways of governing and authority. The age difference between the two is constantly comically emphasized and used to reveal disparity in their worldviews. There are moments of innuendo and conscious flirtation, but these are often interrupted by the mentioning of Cleopatra's true love interest – Mark Antony – whom she remembers as the young captain who has helped her father to regain his kingdom. Caesar is never seen commanding an army, but his orders are channelled through his associates – his secretary Britannus, rightly described as 'visiting Englishman from the nineteenth century'<sup>337</sup> and his right hand – the officer Rufio – left to govern Egypt upon Caesar's departure for Rome at the end of the play.

The play and the portrayal of Caesar are commonly viewed in the light of their importance in the development of Shaw's vision on theatre and its conventions. Caesar's character is seen as the expression of Shaw's philosophical vitalist views related to Wagnerian heroes, Hegelian historical man, the hero-worship investigations of Thomas Carlyle and Mommsen's view of Caesar. While contextualising Caesar within the framework of the above notions is clearly important for defining Shaw's philosophy and reflecting on his dramatic vision, as a historical play *Caesar and Cleopatra* also belongs to a rich tradition of depiction of Caesar as a character with legendary fame. Therefore, this analysis aims to re-focus the play by exploring the Shavian protagonist in relation to the already established critical framework of 'epic-dramatic' Caesar and his relationship with temporality. The philosophical aspects of Shaw's play is recognized as integral to

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<sup>337</sup> Valency (1973:179).

the evaluation of the character; however, the traditionally discussed elements in Shavian dramaturgy and worldviews are considered insofar as they reflect and enhance our understanding of the reception of Caesar in the play and its validity for the overall argument of the thesis. The study is divided into two sections. Firstly, I deal with the epic aspect of Caesar, determined by the author's interest in the heroic; thus the familiar Caesarean qualities, namely speed, omnipresence, fighting delay and establishing control of time are evaluated in their modified, Shavian, versions aiming to create a human, down to earth hero: the efficient hero with superhuman attitude towards revenge and whose control over internal time is exemplified by challenging the process of his own ageing. Drawing on the ideas of historical authorship – both Caesarean and Shavian – the second part explores the transformation of the 'real-performative' Caesarean duality, analysed in the previous chapters, into a reality-dream liminal state, in which Shaw's Caesar exists as a character, self-conscious of his own historical development.

Shaw's play is distinct from the case studies I have already considered since its reception is surrounded and influenced by the author's own ideas about the subject matter and the broader philosophical implications of his works; these are revealed in his notes to the text, his correspondence and, of course, the preface to the play. Thus the process of analysis is complicated by an extra layer of meaning and authorial self-reflection. These aspects invite for a more detailed investigation of Shaw's life and milieu; however, for the purposes of intellectual consistency, I will retain the method of investigation I have already established, namely focusing on the reception of the qualities inherited from Caesar's self-representation. The autobiographical aspects and topical references will be dealt with only in terms of their value for elucidating the overall argument.

## Shaw's epic Caesar

A leitmotif in my study, 'epic' defines Caesar in terms of his relationship with temporality exemplified by fighting delay, controlling time and as a result acquiring a quasi-divine position. In order to elucidate Shawian Caesar's 'epic status', it is necessary to briefly investigate the roots of Shaw's ideas of the heroic.

Shaw's protagonists, both male and female, are typically strong individuals, determined in their action, and showing a high degree of realism and intellectual superiority. As a hero, Shaw's Caesar can be defined by two important and interrelated aspects of Shawian philosophy and concepts of art: opposition to the Shakespearean depiction of Caesar and the wider-reaching and predominant theatrical infatuation with romantic heroes, exemplified in *Antony and Cleopatra*; the notion of the heroic influenced by Wagner's works, philosophical and historical works concerning the role of the leader for determining the course of history – Carlyle, Hegel and Mommsen. Thus the depiction of Caesar is conditioned by a philosophical framework intertwined with concerns about the social and didactic purpose of theatre.<sup>338</sup>

Shaw's relationship with Shakespeare can be analysed on two levels: criticism of *Antony and Cleopatra* in terms of its subject matter and characters, and criticism of Shakespeare's depiction of Julius Caesar. It is important that Shaw does not believe his

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<sup>338</sup> Shaw was inspired by real life, not contemplation in the study; he had unsystematic knowledge of philosophy but also evolved his own system (Nethercot 1954: 58). The influences of various schools of thought on Shaw's works are discussed by Albert (1956); on Carlyle's influence on Shaw, see Wisenthal (1988: 56-76). By considering Shaw's plays in their relation to the anti-Aristotelian drama of action and the well made play, Carpenter (1969: 17-8) establishes links between Shaw's thought and the didactic aspects of Aristotle's *Rhetoric*.



talent to depict characters from antiquity is superior to Shakespeare's – the problem as he sees it, is in the theatre of his age, emphasizing the least valuable elements of Shakespeare's works. Plays such as *Antony and Cleopatra* give grounds for a fascination with shallow romanticism which exposes theatre as a tool for mere entertainment. According to Shaw, true heroism has to be re-modelled as an opposition to empty and illogical romanticism, exemplified by Antony, who is ready to forsake all for love. As an author, Shaw believes in the didactic role of drama and maintains that the audience must leave the auditorium thinking – in his preface to *Three Plays for Puritans*, he maintains that if they are incapable of understanding the intellectual stimuli, people will naturally be inclined to go to the music hall.<sup>339</sup> Shaw does not detest or devalue the Shakespearean achievement in characterization per se, but has issues with what he considers a failure to depict Caesar's true greatness: 'Shakespear, who knew human weakness so well, never knew human strength of the Caesarian type; [...] it cost Shakespear no pang to write Caesar down for the merely technical purpose of writing Brutus up'.<sup>340</sup> In a review of a production of *Caesar*, Shaw wrote:

It is impossible even for the most judicially minded critic to look without a revulsion of indignant contempt at this travestying of a great man as a silly braggart, whilst the pitiful gang of

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<sup>339</sup> Shaw on the 'pleasure-seeker', bored with theatre (Laurence and Leary 1993: 65); his reaction against Shakespeare and the glorification of *Antony and Cleopatra*: in the romance 'the hero, also rigidly commercial, will do nothing except for the sake of heroine. Surely this is as depressing as it is unreal' (1993: 67). Shaw does not reject love, but finds the infatuation with sex frustrating: the ecstasy of sex is valuable, because it provides a sample of 'the ecstasy that may one day be the normal condition of conscious intellectual activity' (Shaw 1949: 115). According to Eric Bentley, romanticism in Shaw's thought means 'hocus-pocus, pretentious and deceptive artifice, the substitution of flattering but unreal and foolish conventions for realities...' (2010:143). To deflate the romance and to make comedy out of tragedy are Shaw's unique contributions (Couchman 1973:12).

<sup>340</sup> Laurence and Leary (1993:78).

mischievous-makers who destroyed him are lauded as statesmen and patriots (Quoted by Wisenthal 1988: 61).

Realism as opposed to idealism – essentially the fake evocation of moral, ethical and nationalistic values – is the quality valued by Shaw as signifying the transformation of romantic ideals into true heroism adequate for the understanding of the modern mind.<sup>341</sup> The heroic is exemplified by the Hegelian historical man: ‘world-historical individuals are those who grasp just such a higher universal, make it their own purpose, and realize this purpose in accordance with the higher law of the spirit. Caesar was such a man’.<sup>342</sup> The historical man, a representative of the aristocracy of nature ‘exempt from moral restrictions of the lesser folk’,<sup>343</sup> is essentially amoral. This idea develops from the basic premise that morality is an abstraction, created by ideology, which does not reflect the real motives, feelings or goals but serves as a disguise for corruption. Although Shaw denied any direct connection to Nietzsche, the notion of the Superman nevertheless remains a keyword for Shawian heroism – it is an aspect which can be traced in many of his plays, the characters being contemporary or historical. The interest in the Superman is often related to Shaw’s fascination with the strong leaders, later expressed in admiration

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<sup>341</sup> Caesar emerges as a ‘realist with a soul, a realist who values his own life as nothing beside the high destiny of Rome’ (Bentley 2010: 155). Seen from a wider perspective, idealism and realism may appear complementary – in Shaw’s *Quintessence of Ibsenism*, idealism and realism are presented ‘as consecutive stages of a dialectic of developing consciousness’ (Lewton 1979: 158); according to Lewton, Shaw rejects rhetoric because it appears as ‘an agent of idealist mystification’ (*ibid.*).

<sup>342</sup> Whitman (1977: 203), quoting Hegel’s *Reason*. Shaw’s interest ‘lies not with Caesar as an individual, but with the theoretical and dramatic relationship between a force, represented in the play by Caesar, and human affairs, with its impact, not on any specific historical moment, but on History’ (Whitman 1977:203). Albert (1956: 422) notes the importance of Hegel for Shaw: ‘...a philosophy like Hegel’s, in treating nature and human civilization as the progressive evolutionary realization of Absolute Mind in the universe, does bear some resemblance to the Shawian conception of a creative Life Force evolving higher forms of life’.

<sup>343</sup> Valency (1973:177).

for Stalin, Mussolini and even Hitler.<sup>344</sup> The historical man is also effectively a leader who embodies a mythological quality very much in Wagnerian terms, another source of inspiration for Shaw. He composed his essay *The Perfect Wagnerite* in 1898, the same year in which he wrote *Caesar and Cleopatra*. Critics have observed the Wagnerian influences on the portrayal of Caesar, but also the differences between Wagnerian heroes and Caesar, who is depicted as a more restrained and wilful individual. Thus, Shaw's Roman general emerges as a curious mixture of mythological heroics and humane hero, not afraid to display weakness.<sup>345</sup>

As a result of his artistic rebellion against the 'bardolatry' and false ideologies, Shaw's Caesar appears as a rival to the very popular Shakespearean character and is effectively a demonstration of the multiplicity of Caesarean representations. Shaw's intention is to reveal the true heroic Caesar, very much the Mommsenite character embodying Roman greatness; however, granting Caesar his historicity also entails its re-modelling to suit Shaw's artistic agenda. Shaw's Caesar is an intelligent realist, amoral but nevertheless benevolent. Most importantly, he is often at the heart of comic situations and is capable of self-irony – for example, to Pothinus' question whether it is possible for a conqueror of the world to occupy himself with such a trifle as the taxes of Egypt, he can easily reply: 'My friend: taxes are the chief business of a conqueror of the world' (43-

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<sup>344</sup> Amongst the characters typifying the Superman to various degrees are Saint Joan and Napoleon. On Shaw and Nietzsche, the superman, transcending good and evil and vitalist philosophy, see Nethercot (1954). According to Couchman (1973), Shaw's well-founded criticism of the capitalistic democracy is problematically mixed with admiration for the strong men, who had become mass murderers of the twentieth century. Although Shaw rejects democracy as panacea, he is against fascist racism and its cult of unreason; what Shaw admires in Stalin is that he turns decadence into discipline (Bentley 1943: 121). Wisenthal (1988: 67) notes that Shaw's later views acknowledge the defects of government by great men; Wisenthal concludes that there is no uncritical hero worship in Shaw (*ibid.*).

<sup>345</sup> Although Shavian realistic heroes have common traits with the heroes of myth, his Caesar rejects actions common to mythic heroes, namely pursuits of love, revenge and exotic adventure (Vesonder 1978: 75-76); the Shavian hero, unlike Siegfried for instance, is 'not a super body but a super spirit' (Meisel 1963:76); Turco (1976: 110-6) analyses Shaw's *The Perfect Wagnerite* (1898) and pays attention to Shaw's identification of Wagnerian giants with philistines, gods with idealists and heroes with realists.

44).<sup>346</sup> This Caesar is the protagonist in a play, which, as ‘the most highly developed forensic drama of the period’, uses theatrical conventions of history and romantic plays in order to subvert them.<sup>347</sup> In addition, Shaw subverts certain Caesarean ideals of historical gravity – by introducing humour, he adds a vital component to Caesar’s dramatic reception, necessary for his appreciation as a ‘human’ hero. ‘Humanizing’ the hero, bringing him down to earth, is an essential aspect of Shaw’s conception of Caesar. It appears as a peculiar contrast to his interest in the Superman, but in fact the essence of the Shavian hero is to be intellectually superior yet to remain prone to human limitations.<sup>348</sup> A central aspect of this process of ‘humanizing’ is the internalization – the reflection on Caesar’s internal experiences of celerity, temporality and the motivation for his mercy.

### **The efficient hero: Caesar’s speed**

Caesar’s legendary celerity can most adequately be related to one of Shaw’s characteristics of the hero – efficiency. To make swift decisions and to possess the boldness to act distinguishes Shavian protagonists; Shaw claims that ‘one efficient sinner

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<sup>346</sup> All quotations from the play are taken from Shaw, G.B. 1960. *Caesar and Cleopatra* (Longmans, Green and Co.); references are to page numbers.

<sup>347</sup> Carpenter (1969:18). The idea of Shaw subverting popular genres, such as the romantic drama and the history play, is discussed by Carpenter (1969:19) – by attacking ideals, Shaw demonstrates creativity: ‘[T]he ideal-destroying strategy of *Caesar and Cleopatra* involves a lopsided competition between a number of dramatized points of view, ideal and otherwise, and an impression of natural heroic virtue conveyed through the feelings that underlie Caesar’s sophisticated ideas’ (176).

<sup>348</sup> As Berst (1973: 84) rightly put it: ‘Caesar’s sense of humor is a measure for his sophistication’. Bertolini (1981: 341) considers the play and the Ra prologue in particular as offering a sardonic view of Caesar’s role in history: ‘Shaw’s dramaturgy forces us to look at Caesar ironically, to see him as an essentially comic figure on the stage of history, not merely as a heroic figure with human weaknesses’. According to Meisel, Caesar is ‘perfectly free of heroic illusion...’ (1963:117).

is worth ten futile saints and martyrs'.<sup>349</sup> The active hero emerges as the perfect Caesarean with speed and efficiency marking his behaviour and communication with the world – or as Shaw put it in his preface to *Three Plays for Puritans*: 'romanticism will have to face the Bismarckian man of action, impatient of humbug...'<sup>350</sup> Together with military exploits, traditionally, historical and dramatic accounts of Caesar in Egypt focus on his relationship with Cleopatra, which causes an unusual delay in his progress towards victory in the Civil War. The characteristic sensual aura of luxury and escapism is felt in Shaw's play: the general is amazed at the exoticism of the Alexandrian palace and its inhabitants; at a lavish dinner, under the influence of the Lesbian wine, he even indulges in daydreaming about reaching the sources of the Nile. However, even though Caesar engages in dallying with the young queen, his actions are not made to appear delayed by the affair – Caesarean efficiency could never be completely checked by Cleopatra. Thus the problem of delay in the sense of disturbing the course of Caesar's campaign is not presented.<sup>351</sup>

This impression is partly due to the fact that the Civil War is not featured in the play apart from fragmentary retrospective presented in the 'Ra prologue' and the 'alternative to the prologue', in which we are introduced to the war and the defeat of Pompey. In Act II, Pothinus hints of the possibility that Cato and king Juba may organize resistance in Africa (47); however, there is no clear knowledge that the Pompeians are regrouping. In fact, although we sense a bitter premonition of his assassination to come, supported by Rufio's sceptical attitude towards Caesarean mercy, when Caesar departs

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<sup>349</sup> Shaw (1930: 257).

<sup>350</sup> Laurence and Leary (1993:70).

<sup>351</sup> Thus Meisel (1963: 77): 'The Shavian hero does not have time to track down a golden fleece or a holy grail'; the dream of finding the sources of Nile are soon forgotten when Pothinus is murdered (*ibid.*); Meisel also sees Caesar as a mature hero, for whom sexual involvement is a distraction (1963: 78).

for Rome the play leaves us with the feeling that his adversaries have been overwhelmed. Moreover, Cleopatra, very different from the temptress created by ancient historians, does not aim to keep Caesar in Alexandria. At the beginning of the play she desperately needs her 'tutor' to guide her through the learning process of becoming a queen. Once she reaches a level of security, she feels ready to let Caesar go. Realizing that Caesar is not only responsible for Mark Antony's appearance in Egypt when she met him, but that the general can also send Antony to Alexandria again, this time to become her husband, the girl-turned-queen urges Caesar to leave so she can get her young man.

Caesar's attitude towards his 'pupil' is similarly unrelated to any sense of emotional attachment – in fact at the end of the play he forgets about Cleopatra and almost leaves without seeing her; this is an indication that this relationship, albeit not superficial, is hardly capable of altering the course of Caesar's career. Not surprisingly, the action of the play encompasses less time than history would allow it – Caesar's departure from Alexandria is noted as taking place in the winter of 47 BC, thus shortening the whole event by almost six months; this attests to the overall impetus of Caesar's life to move forward, acknowledged in the play. So, although he is somewhat captivated by the girl whom he tutors to become a queen, unlike in other dramatizations, (*The False One*, for example), she is incapable of jeopardizing Caesar's efficiency. As we shall see below, whenever Caesarean celerity is a subject to disruption in the play, this is due to internal volatility.

Caesarean speed, with its destructive powers, is introduced in the so-called 'alternative to the prologue'. The scene opens with a group of Egyptian guardsmen; their captain Belzanor and a Persian recruit are playing dice. Situated at the Syrian border, they

are ignorant of Julius Caesar's imminent arrival until a newcomer – Bel Afris – arrives and, acting as parody of the tragic messenger, narrates the story of the defeated Egyptians who happened to stand in Caesar's way in his pursuit of Pompey. Bel Afris's account of Caesarean victories creates an implicit contrast between his interlocutors' inactivity and Caesar's swift progress through the country. The messenger explains that the battle he took part in 'was over in a moment. The attack came just where we least expected it' (19). One of the fine comic moments created by Bel Afris is that throughout the scene he keeps reminding everyone that Caesar is closer than they expect. He ends his first-hand account of the Egyptian defeat with the warning that they should open the gates for victorious Caesar, whose advance guard is 'scarce an hour behind me' (21). The guards begin a debate regarding their course of action and whether it would be profitable to sell the women in the palace to the Romans but to carry Cleopatra away from Caesar's reach and then sell her to Ptolemy. Bel Afris reminds them: 'Take heed, Persian. Caesar is by this time almost within earshot' (22). When the Persian cunningly suggests they should tempt Caesar to fight against Ptolemy to save Cleopatra and rule Egypt with her, the guardsmen admire his devious mind, but Bel Afris once again interrupts: '[Caesar] will also have arrived before you have done talking, o word spinner' (23). These comic intrusions subtly demonstrate the force of Caesarean speed and set a characteristic pattern of contrast, various examples of which are to be discussed throughout the chapter – in this case celerity against procrastination, which brings out the comic elements of the play.

Caesar himself does not emphasize his speed but occasionally demonstrates impatience characteristic for the character of the general depicted in the *African War* (discussed in chapter 3). In Act II, he receives the news of the Egyptian attack and gives

orders to his most trusted officer and friend Rufio to burn the ships in the West harbour, then to take those remaining in the East harbour and to seize Pharos. A few minutes later he is already asking if the burning of the ships has been completed (58). Wasting no more time, Rufio runs out and soon returns – Caesar is amazed how quickly the order has been enacted, but in fact he is told that the ships have been burned by the Egyptians. Caesar impatiently asks about the East harbour action. Here the authority of his impatience and haste is suddenly checked by Rufio:

RUFIO *[with a sudden splutter of raging ill usage, coming down to Caesar and scolding him]* Can I embark a legion in five minutes? [...] If you want faster work, come and do it yourself. (58-9)

Rufio's ability to hamper Caesar's impatience is not a mark of 'friendly' delay, such as the attempts of friends and family to stop Caesar's going to the Capitol in Shakespeare's play; it is a demonstration of a realistic view on the situation – in this case the manoeuvring of a legion. Clearly, Rufio (like Shaw) is a true Caesarean, so such criticism is not meant to undermine Caesar's positive qualities as a general, but to show how legendary speed could be de-mythologized and yet remain a positive quality, which moves the action forward.

In Act III, Rufio grows even more comically insolent. At the lighthouse of Pharos, while Rufio is calmly eating dates, Caesar is beginning to doubt the success of the operation:



CAESAR [*coming away from the parapet, shivering and out of sorts*] Rufio: this has been a mad expedition. We shall be beaten. I wish I knew how our men are getting on with that barricade across the great mole.

RUFIO [*angrily*] Must I leave my food and go starving to bring you a report?

CAESAR [*soothing him nervously*] No, Rufio, no. Eat my son, eat. (76)

It appears that Caesar's impatience is curbed by his affection for his officer – for a moment the military scene is replaced by a more domestic one, in which war is readily postponed while Rufio eats undisturbed. The situation is comically absurd since it is impossible to imagine even his closest friends responding in such way to Julius Caesar depicted in historiography. Moreover, by demonstrating how the famous Caesarean impetus of celerity could be subjected to constraints produced by simple everyday situations, Shaw transforms it into a human rather than the quasi-divine quality seen in previous representations of Caesar.

Rufio's role as regulator of Caesarean speed is twofold, since he can also spur Caesar's actions on some occasions. In the abovementioned scene when the general is troubled by growing sense of anxiety about the outcome of the expedition and reaches the brink of despair, once again it is Rufio who rescues Caesar from the depression and gives momentum to his energy. He offers him some dates, claiming that 'when a man comes to your age, he runs down before his midday meal. Eat and drink; and then have another look at our chances' (76). By feeding him the sweet fruits, Rufio causes a brisk and comic transformation in Caesar – each date helps him to dispel his fatigue and

depression. His zeal and efficiency return and he can face and defeat the enemy once again.<sup>352</sup>

The Egyptian episode, considered overall, may not pose a delay in the life and career of Shaw's Caesar, but within the action of the play, Caesar nevertheless tends to get distracted by Cleopatra. By interfering with the military affairs of the 'adults', she often provokes Caesar's natural disposition to talking and sermonizing, a character trait which will be subject to discussion in the last section of this chapter. In Act II, Rufio has to cut short Caesar's dialogue with Cleopatra, who, whilst assisting him with putting on his armour (suggesting a parody of Shakespeare's *Antony and Cleopatra*) notices Caesar's baldness; this triggers a witty exchange of lines, including Cleopatra's advice to cure baldness and their 'deal' to take ten out of Caesar's superfluous years to be given to Cleopatra to make her a mature twenty-six-year old queen.<sup>353</sup> Clearly, to Rufio, the situation at the palace, soon to be attacked by the Egyptians, is no place for such frivolous talk. Therefore, with the sternness of a parent, he scolds the general: 'Now Caesar, have you done talking? The moment your foot is aboard there will be no holding our men back...' (62). Rufio's remark reminds us and Caesar that he is connected to his army in one entity, which must operate in unity in order to be successful. By giving Rufio the power to control Caesar's celerity – encouraging it when necessary and hindering it when threatening to get out of hand – Shaw highlights the existence of Caesar and his army as one living organism, a somewhat more benevolent version of the monstrous entity in

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<sup>352</sup> In his analysis of the *commedia dell'Arte* elements in the play, Reardon (1971: 129) considers the dates episode as resembling the so-called 'lazzi of eating cherries'. Reardon offers an interesting interpretation of Caesar's character in terms of his association with stock characters of *Commedia dell'arte*: Caesar combines qualities of Harlequin, Pierrot, Scapio and the Capitano; however, 'it is Pantalone who seems to be reincarnated most completely in his person' (1971:131).

<sup>353</sup> In his notes to the play, Shaw jokingly explains that Cleopatra suggesting the use of rum is the only real anachronism in the play; to counterbalance the imaginary recipe, Shaw offers remedies the queen allegedly believed in, quoted by Galen from Cleopatra's book on cosmetics.

Lucan's epic. Rufio's role is to subvert Caesarean heroic individualism and to demonstrate that his successes are a product of his cooperation with his army. So, Caesar's officer plays a very important role – he becomes the outward emanation of Caesarean speed, as it were, and brings the excesses Caesar is prone to – impatience and irrational speed or delay and hesitation – within reasonable limits. The necessity of an external regulator of Caesarean celerity highlights the character's internal experience of intention, conditioned by all too human uncertainty.

### **Superman = better than god, or whom Caesar loves**

In the works I have considered so far, it has been demonstrated that the notion of omnipresence creates the characteristic Caesarean aura of quasi-divinity and becomes an important feature of his self-representation. At first glance, Shaw's Caesar is hardly ubiquitous – his actions lack the scope of Lucan's epic and there is no hint of the victorious spirit of Shakespeare's Caesar who would haunt the stage and doom the conspirators. Clearly, this is a result of Shaw's intention to create his 'human' hero: in narrative terms, the reason could be found in the above-mentioned absence of references to Caesar's speed applied to large scale military campaigns; Caesar is never seen leading his army or becoming the dictator for life in Rome – surrounded by a handful of associates, Shaw's hero occupies one place at a time and deals with Cleopatra's often trifling issues. In historiography, Caesarean quasi-divinity is confronted by religious scepticism and the performativity of Caesar's supreme religious post. However, none of the plays discussed in my study deal with Caesar's explicit claims for divinity;

accordingly, the issues of divine honours and Caesar's position as *pontifex maximus* in Rome are ignored by Shaw too. Nevertheless, as the attitude of the characters towards the general, as well as his self-evaluation attest, Caesar's Superman qualities are not void of religious associations: this relationship between divinity and the Superman is founded on the notion of mercy as feature of Caesarean superhuman status.

In order to unveil the superhuman/divine Shavian Caesar, I begin with his attitude towards superstition. In my study of Caesar's historical representation, I have maintained a view of Caesar as a man who combines personal disregard for omens and a possible Epicurean stance with his position as *Pontifex Maximus*. The approach of Shaw's Caesar towards superstition is largely inherited from ancient historiography and is revealed in two potent comic episodes. In Act II, Caesar appears in the palace before Ptolemy, his guardian Pothinus and the royal court. During the scene, Rufio asks for a chair to be brought for the general. Since the only option to sit is given by the boy king Ptolemy, who shyly offers his throne, duly refused by Caesar, Rufio extinguishes the burning incense from a bronze tripod, forming an altar of the god Ra, and offers it to Caesar. Julius sits on it, paying no attention to the members of the court, who whisper 'Sacrilege!'<sup>354</sup> On another occasion, during the dinner organized by Cleopatra in Act IV, after Caesar vouches to found a city at the sources of the Nile, the adolescent queen suggests the guests perform a ceremony to evoke the god Nile to name the future city. Caesar's reaction is in accordance with his religious scepticism – he exclaims: '[A]re such superstitions still active in year 707 of the republic?' (103). The comic effect of this

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<sup>354</sup> The comedy of this scene is related to Bergson's theory, expressed in his work on laughter – the moment a tragic hero sits down, it becomes a comedy (Couchman 1973:134); Couchman points out other comic devices employed in the play – inversion (Caesar patiently enduring criticism of Rufio and Brittanus), vanity, absentmindedness (1973: 135-7).

utterance is created by the identification of the year according to ancient time reckoning whilst using modern manner of speech.

There are more references to Egyptian superstition showing dismissive attitude towards the Egyptians' more archaic religious system – for example, at the beginning of Act V, we hear from the Sicilian artist Apollodorus that upon Caesar's victory the Egyptian priests met him at the market place and placed their gods at his feet: the 'only one that was worth looking at was Apis: a miracle of gold and ivory work' (115). This attitude – essentially a mixture of admiration of artworks and snobbery – characterizes the Roman (or perhaps the British imperial) lack of appreciation of the foreign cultures, but is also a sign of intellectual sophistication, dismissing religion as superstition. The easiness with which the Romans destroy religious symbols of Egypt, as well as Caesar's above-mentioned reaction to what may be accepted as valid, albeit perhaps childish evocation of a deity – Cleopatra's ritual – demonstrates Caesarean (imperial) reason prevailing over superstition. Shaw creates a sense of distance between religious practice and the superior quality of reason, embodied by Caesar, the power of which does not depend on ritual.<sup>355</sup> However, the difference between god and Superman is not readily perceived especially when we consider how the other characters evaluate Caesar and the way the general sees himself.

The episode with the tripod may demonstrate Caesar's scepticism, but for the Egyptians in the palace it is also a potent demonstration of his powers over the gods. Thus, for those worshipping the old deities, the rational sceptical man becomes a power above the divine. However, as Caesar himself acknowledges, he is only part god. His first

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<sup>355</sup> Berst (1973: 88) notes the contrast between the Egyptian magic of night and the Roman daylight, pragmatism, temporal rule, supernal common sense of Caesar.

appearance in the desert at night, the address to the sphinx and the ensuing dialogue with Cleopatra is one of the most character-defining episodes in the play.<sup>356</sup> Caesar tells the sphinx: ‘[...] I am he of whose genius you are the symbol: part brute, part woman, and part god – nothing of man in me at all...’ (28); Caesar does not feel divine, let alone superior to the gods – he feels different. The second part of this chapter deals precisely with Caesarean existential issues, revealed in this speech. For now, it is enough to point out that this statement can be assessed as Caesar’s conscious belief that he does not make any claims for divine prerogatives.<sup>357</sup> Caesar’s awkward position between the divine and human is reinforced by the discrepancy in the Egyptians and Romans’ worldviews – the pragmatic, superstition-free minds of the Romans meet the more ancient religious beliefs of the Egyptians. So, the ‘divine’ aspects of Shaw’s protagonist in fact follow historical Caesar’s attitude – he is sceptical, rational about superstition, but his charisma and abilities, combined with disregard for Egyptian religion, make him *appear* divine. However, the real transformation from the quasi-divine persona, recognizable in historiography, to a distinctive Shavian superman is determined by Caesar’s mercy and his rejection of revenge.

The attitude towards murder, revenge and his uncompromising mercy are amongst the most debated aspects of Shavian Caesar. I have argued in the previous chapters that clemency has been established as a defining element of ‘epic-dramatic’ Caesar: in the *Commentaries*, his benevolence is related to humaneness and reason; Lucan and Shakespeare omit this particular aspect in order to depict Caesar as demonic

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<sup>356</sup> According to Wilson (1969: 154), the description of Caesar’s first appearance reveals a sense of unity of mood reminiscent to Wagner’s *Ring*.

<sup>357</sup> Vesonder (1978: 74) argues that Shaw was not seriously trying to establish Caesar’s divinity but that he may have been playing with mythic conventions or incorporating in the play the historical Caesar’s claims to divinity.

conqueror and performer in the virtual reality play, constructed by the conspirators, respectively; drawing on the contrasting views of historiography regarding the motives behind mercy and Caesar's real character, Chapman experiments with his protagonist and the result is a merciful person, who appears sincere, save for the element of distancing brought by the use of third person to denote 'performance of mercy' mode. The complexity of the Shavian Caesar's relationship with the divine is to be found precisely in the lack of performativity which is replaced by the compelling sincerity of Caesar's superhuman self. Moreover, the divine aspect of Shaw's character is more firmly related to mercy than in any other of the considered works. This connection shapes Caesar as superhuman not in terms of force but benevolence, thus in effect presenting mercy as a defining feature of the superman. Mercy is strongly and explicitly connected to the rejection of revenge and for the first time a possible moral (or indeed, amoral) background to Caesar's actions is revealed. Shaw's take on the Roman general's legendary *clementia* reveals a multi-layered understanding of both its motives and implications for Caesar and the other characters.

When in Act IV Pothinus asks Cleopatra whether Caesar loves her, she replies that he loves no one. According to her reasoning, we love those we do not hate and Caesar 'has no hatred in him: he makes friends with everyone as he does with dogs and children' (91). Yet Cleopatra is touched by the kindness Caesar shows towards her. When Pothinus remarks that this is indeed love, the queen refutes him: 'What! When he will do as much for the first girl he meets on his way back to Rome?' (*ibid.*). Everyone benefits from Caesar's benevolence and the reason is not in *their* nature, but in *Caesar's* nature,

filled with all-encompassing kindness.<sup>358</sup> To Pothinus' sneer: 'Ha! Perhaps I should have asked, then, do you love him?', Cleopatra replies with rhetorical question: 'Can one love a god?' (91). Given Cleopatra's affection for Caesar, the question probably is not whether she loves him, but whether due to the great distance between her mindset and Caesar's, her love would not inevitably be transformed into reverence. Not surprisingly, due to the great disparity of worldviews between the young queen and the Roman general, the object of her affection is not god, but man – Mark Antony. Caesar's personality and his attitude towards the world are alien to everyone, including Cleopatra who is tutored by him. She relates the image of god Caesar to his nature which objects to both love and hatred; this neutrality characterizes him as amoral and forms the basis of his mercy, but also alienates him from most human beings. Thus the fact that Caesar's attitude is interpreted in various ways by those affected by his mercy infuses his actions with a sense of irony.

Upon his arrival at the Egyptian palace, Caesar insists that the members of the Egyptian royal court are his guests and are free to go. Pothinus reacts: 'you are turning us out of our own palace into the streets; and you tell us with a grand air that we are free to go! It is for you to go' (49). To these objections Caesar exclaims that his right to do his will is in the scabbard of Rufio and he may not be able to hold it in check any longer.<sup>359</sup> The Roman leader disturbs the order of the royal palace with a comic insolence; however, matters become more serious when, appalled by the behaviour of the Romans, Theodotus

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<sup>358</sup> Carpenter (1969: 170) discusses the conditions for greatness according to Shaw: freedom from ideals, will, manifested in various activities over a long period of time; both qualities are exemplified by Wagner's Siegfried, however, neither Siegfried nor indeed Napoleon (another Shavian hero) are able to show kindness, which is the factor that determines the height of virtue to which a man can rise.

<sup>359</sup> This line clearly echoes ancient historians' accounts: in Plutarch, similar line is uttered by a Caesarean captain, who hearing that the Senate would not allow the general to retain his provincial command, clapping his hand on the hilt of his sword, exclaims: 'But this shall' (Plutarch, 29); in Appian's version, it is Caesar himself who speaks the line (2.25).



– young Ptolemy’s tutor – reveals the murder of Pompey and presents Caesar with what sounds like the unsaid and disturbing truth lurking between the lines of history: ‘Thanks to us, you keep your reputation for clemency, and have your vengeance too’ (50). Shaw’s Caesar seems sincerely appalled by the murder of Pompey, ‘for 20 years the master of great Rome, for 30 years the compeller of victory’ (50). He exclaims: ‘Am I Julius Caesar, or am I a wolf, that you fling to me the grey head of the old soldier, the laurelled conqueror [...] and then claim my gratitude for it!’ (50) This reaction is consistent with the portrayal of Caesar in the *Commentaries* and certainly with the high dramatic points in Chapman’s tragedy and Beaumont and Massinger’s *The False One* – in both plays, Caesar condemns the deed and swears revenge.

Yet Shaw constructs a different situation: the scene continues with the bold rebuke by Septimius, Pompey’s assassin: ‘you have seen severed heads before, Caesar, and severed right hands too, I think; some thousands of them, in Gaul, after you vanquished Vercingetorix’ (50). Caesar’s reply bears the whole complexity of Shavian moral philosophy: the general’s greatness allows him to confess his mistakes – he describes the treatment of the Gallic chief as a mark of ‘wise severity’; with ‘shuddering satire’, Caesar confesses that at that time he thought such actions necessary for the common good. This self-reflection leads to apology to Septimius: ‘why should the slayer of Vercingetorix rebuke the slayer of Pompey?’ (51).<sup>360</sup> In a pronounced difference to the treatment of the episode by other authors, Shaw’s Caesar is here provoked to show reaction to the accusation that the murder of Pompey is in fact beneficial for him.

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<sup>360</sup> Couchman (1973: 63) considers the scene as a sign of Shaw’s momentary subjection to romanticism and hero-worshipping; similar view is expressed by Brown (1950: 248) who believes that Caesar himself would have liked his character: ‘Caesar’s self-love could not have been greater than Shaw’s almost romantic infatuation with the benevolent despot he depicted’.

However, he does not only reflect on his own mistaken assumptions in the past and equals himself to the murderer, but he also spares Lucius' life and even offers him a place in his retinue thus confirming the universality of Caesarean clemency.<sup>361</sup> Not unlike Chapman's Caesar, Shaw's protagonist demonstrates he can be fair and self-critical. The complexity of the scene is heightened by the fact that Caesar reflects on his own ideas of rightful and unjust violence; he seems to have realized that murder should be condemned especially when its motives are disguised as ideological. This is the first glance into the logic of Caesar's mercy – the evolution of his thought towards more enlightened and sophisticated reasoning of the value of preserving people's lives.<sup>362</sup>

Probably Caesar's most quoted speech is his emotional outburst in Act IV following the disclosure of the details regarding Pothinus' death. Pothinus accuses Cleopatra of planning to become the sole ruler of Egypt and to benefit from Caesar's departure. Upon hearing this, the general demonstrates a characteristic acceptance of behaviour, motivated by natural (that is, not ideologically conditioned) impulses – he is neither surprised, nor aggravated by this prospect, since it would be a 'natural' act. Cleopatra, however, afraid to lose Caesar's favour and her authority, secretly orders her nurse Ftatateeta to execute Ptolemy's guardian. Upon their realization of what had transpired, everyone, including Rufio and Britannus, express their acclaim of the deed. However, Caesar points out that the crowd outside the palace would seek revenge for the

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<sup>361</sup> When Septimius presents his crime as dutiful vengeance, he loses Caesar's favour; however, when Septimius' actual motive becomes apparent, Caesar rehabilitates him and grants him a minor command; however, although Shaw favours natural motives, he does not tolerate natural vice because it represents the beastly aspect of man (Carpenter (1969: 176-7). Berst (1973: 92) considers Caesar and Lucius as kinsmen since Caesar's benevolence depends on the scabbard of Rufio and the treachery of Lucius.

<sup>362</sup> Irvine (1949: 231) is not convinced by the realism of Caesar since he paradoxically reconciles despotism with virtue and world conquest with non-violence; Irvine considers this 'clockwork superman' to be much more sentimental and much less real than Napoleon and ascribes Shaw's sentimentality to the fact that the play was created on a honeymoon.

death of their leader: '[Y]ou have slain their leader: it is right that they shall slay you. [...] And so, to the end of history, murder shall breed murder, always in the name of right and honour and peace, until the gods are tired of blood and create a race that can understand' (108). This speech stands out as the serious moral of the comedy and shows something important about Caesar's character – his natural resistance to the irrational emotion at the heart of revenge. Thus Shaw's character is once again influenced by Caesarean self-representation as reasonable and rational. Another important scene concerning Caesar's attitude towards his enemies can be found in Act III when the general is presented with a bag, containing the correspondence between Pompey and the Roman army of occupation in Egypt. Caesar refuses to read the names of the people who had conspired against him:

CAESAR: Would you have me waste the next three years of my life in proscribing and condemning men who will be my friends when I have proved that my friendship is worth more than Pompey's was – or Cato's is (77).

He throws the bag into the sea, thus involuntarily causing the near sinking and death of Cleopatra and Apollodorus whose boat is at that moment approaching the lighthouse. This fresh comic moment lightens up our thoughts about the potential tragic outcome of Caesarean clemency, which may cause damage to innocent people and, of course, to Caesar himself.<sup>363</sup>

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<sup>363</sup> This demonstration of 'the unintended effects of Caesar's mercifulness' is noted by Bertolini (1981: 337).

Ancient historiography gives rise to doubts regarding the sincerity of Caesar's benevolence, whose performativity of mercy increases this suspicion. The *Commentaries* depict the general who, in preserving people's lives, is guided by reason and the assumption that he may cooperate with them in the future, but also acts out of sheer benevolence. I have already mentioned the lack of performativity in Shaw's Caesar, whose mercy is sincere. Shaw also establishes reason as Caesar's defining quality but characteristically combines it with a strong resistance to revenge. The Roman leader is shocked by the notion of vengeance and the realization of its inescapable causal chain – that violence will breed violence – makes him merciful. The power of Shavian characterization and dramaturgical construction lies in the ability to create a sense of irony when Caesar's actions are evaluated by the others: his reaction to revenge appears emotional and illogical, whereas the motives of Cleopatra are accepted as valid and logical by everyone.<sup>364</sup> In the same vein, Rufio, sounding as the voice of reason, tells Caesar: 'Clemency is very well for you; but what is it for your soldiers, who have to fight tomorrow the men you spared yesterday?' (52). Similarly to the practical benefits of sparing people's lives, the problems caused by *clementia* can also be practical. However, Caesarean mercy retains its practical connotations precisely because of his neutrality and lack of idealism. His mercy is not coated in the garments of ideology;<sup>365</sup> moreover, he is aware of his image of a merciful man and exploits it to gain advantage over his enemies – when Rufio once again protests against leniency, Caesar tells him: 'Every Egyptian we

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<sup>364</sup> Caesar exists in a 'sustained conflict between clemency and force, attraction and pressure, reality and appearance, the saint and the practical man' (Leary 1962:43); Caesar possesses candid and direct originality which few understand (1962:44). The scene reflects what Hugo (1971: 112) identifies as the most serious question raised in the play, namely 'when may authority pass the death sentence on a human being?'.  
<sup>365</sup> Caesar finds unacceptable the attempts to make virtue out of murder by evoking abstractions such as justice (Whitman 1977: 207); Turco (1976: 105-6) analyses the relationship between the main characters in terms of triangular structure identified in *The Devil's Disciple* too: Caesar is opposed by Rufio the philistine and Cleopatra who hides her cruelty under the idealistic disguise of her role as a queen.

imprison means imprisoning two Roman soldiers to guard him. Eh?’ (61). Rufio seems to regain faith in his commander’s reason: ‘Agh! I might have known there was some fox’s trick behind your fine talking’ (61).

The problem of seeing mercy and rejection of revenge as illogical, sometimes outward folly in Caesar strongly reflects on the assessment of his reaction to the three deaths marking the second half of the play. Pothinus is being killed by the order of Cleopatra – his death cries are heard during the dinner on the background of the purple sunset;<sup>366</sup> later, the executioner of the king’s advisor – Ftatateeta – is murdered by Rufio, who, considering the nurse’s potentially negative influence on Cleopatra, decides to dispatch her. Although we only hear about the third murder – the drowning of Ptolemy in the Nile during the battle against the Romans – the news of his death arrives just before victorious Caesar is welcomed by his soldiers. Clearly, Shaw’s Caesar is, after all, a soldier who knows equally well the value of life and the necessity of death.<sup>367</sup> He does not express compassion towards the drowned boy; neither does he feel hatred towards Pothinus. After Rufio explains the murder of Ftatateeta by means of analogy to the murder of a menacing beast – an act motivated by self-preservation, not disguised as ideology of justice – Caesar accepts his officer’s act as ‘natural slaying’. Such (lack of) reaction does not necessarily demonstrate the domination of reason over emotions but is a rejection of the ideology and false moral principles governing emotions. Disconnected from moral obligations and thus creating new emotionality of benevolence based on

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<sup>366</sup> According to Adams (1975: 80-2), Act IV is akin to the literature of the decadence: in the midst of the picture of court violence, Shaw introduces the lavish banquet scene; ordering the murder of Pothinus, Cleopatra behaves like a ‘decadent empress’; however, the murder scene is not the dramatic climax, because Shaw’s aim is to emphasize the moral issues raised by the spectacle. According to Crompton (1971: 66-7), Shaw’s depiction of Cleopatra as cruel and sadistic is ‘dynastic view’ of a typical Ptolemy.

<sup>367</sup> ‘Caesar kills that he may bring enlightened peace to prevail’ (Hugo 1971:113). Bertolini (1981:340) is critical of Caesar’s attitude towards vengeance – after all, Caesar plans the bloodshed of the Egyptian army and in act V conquers Ptolemy treated so sympathetically in act II.

acceptance of natural impulses, Caesarean clemency paradoxically may include murder. The contradiction of the acceptance of natural murder and the rejection of revenge is resolved when Caesar's mercy is considered in the light of his amorality. However, since no other character in the play is capable of understanding such a thought pattern, Caesar emerges as messianic figure, proclaiming a new age of pure intellectual reasoning.<sup>368</sup> Through benevolence and rejection of revenge quasi-divine Caesar is elevated into Superman, and as a result he is destined to remain alien to the others who confront his neutrality with what they believe are their moral principles or reasonable actions.

### **Yet down to earth: internal vs. universal time**

In the chapter on Caesar's representation in ancient historiography, I argued that omnipresent Caesar dominates temporality in terms of his calendar reform and the identification of mythological origins, effectively becoming the focal point of past, present and future; the control of time is expressed also as a way to control people's lifetimes. Even in the convoluted way of Shakespeare's *Caesar*, control of time is performed by the Caesarean spirit which transcends his corporeal limitations and gains control over history. The only example of Caesar losing his grip on time is Chapman's tragedy, in which the general's arriving too late to stop Cato's suicide threatens to undermine his victory against the Pompeians. In *Caesar and Cleopatra*, although

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<sup>368</sup> The messianic aura of Caesar evoking allusions with Christ (Morgan (1972: 243), Leary (1962: 46)); visual references to Christian imagery in the play (Wisenthal 1988: 59); according to Gibbs (1983:111), 'Dudgeon, Caesar and Lady Cicely each emerge in their plays as New Testament figures in societies dominated by Old Testament codes'; Vesonder (1978: 78) finds the Christian analogy in Caesar's opposition to the eye-for-an-eye law (*lex talionis*). Whitman (1977: 208) believes that 'the feeling of almost godlike isolation that characterizes the lonely heights of the realist' is something Caesar shares with other Shavian heroes such as Joan, Undershaft and Henry Higgins.

ultimately insignificant for the outcome of events, the important oscillation between haste and delay (skilfully controlled by Rufio) remains internal to the Caesarean psyche. This indeterminacy does not cast suspicion over Caesar's successful operation at the Pharos lighthouse and his victory in the war. However, we are given the chance to see the uncertainty that transpires behind the outward manifestation of Caesarean efficiency. The second step of the Caesarean 'epic progression' is marked by Caesar's transformation from quasi-divine hero into Superman, defined by his mercy and attitude towards revenge. Thus Shaw, with his portrayal of Caesar's internal impulses – hesitation between delay and efficiency and his amoral motives – initiates a very important process of internalization experienced by his protagonist. This process develops in the third aspect of epic Caesar: in order to establish control of temporality, Shaw's character faces a new adversary far stronger than delay – his own ageing.

Throughout his existence as self-constructed, epic, historical and dramatic character, Caesar utters a single significant remark which may be taken to refer to ageing: 'I have lived long enough either for nature or for glory';<sup>369</sup> in fact, it is used by Shaw, whose Caesar, upon his departure to Rome, ominously remarks: 'I shall finish my life's work on my way back; and then I shall have lived long enough. Besides: I have always disliked the idea of dying: I had rather be killed' (117). Although this statement reflects on the grave issues of the doom of Caesarean absolute power, the most potent comic leitmotif in *Caesar and Cleopatra* is related precisely to Caesar's age, his realization of the passage of time and its inevitable mundane results, such as balding and rheumatism. Shaw's Caesar constantly reminds himself and is reminded by the other characters of the fact that he is ageing. Cleopatra addresses him as 'old gentleman' – seen through the eyes

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<sup>369</sup> Quoted by Cicero in his *Pro Marcello* (8).

of a teenager, middle-aged Caesar ranks amongst the elderly. When in Act II the queen helps the general to put on his armour, she laughs at his baldness and the attempt to hide it by wearing an oak wreath. The oak wreath is a witty detail, borrowed from ancient historiography, according to which Caesar was awarded the *corona civica* after the siege of Mytilene in which he took part in his youth.<sup>370</sup> This comic fragment potentially invites a more complex interpretation, since Caesar's choice of oak wreath refers to a moment in the past and creates the impression that he does not want to part with his youth. Nevertheless, any possible illusions Caesar may have about his age are shattered when Cleopatra remarks that with his armour he looks only about fifty. Caesar's age is emphasized by the contrast with Cleopatra's adolescence, as well as by references to her dream lover/husband Antony. Antony is first 'introduced' in Act II, when Cleopatra recounts how the young Roman had come to Egypt to restore her father Ptolemy to the throne. When Caesar tells her that it was he who sent the beautiful young man, she insists on marrying Antony with Caesar's help. Caesar agrees and, upon his departure, promises to send Antony back to Egypt. As well as the superhuman intellectual sophistication Cleopatra sees another important difference between Caesar and Antony – age:

CLEOPATRA He is many, m a n y years younger than you, is he not?

CAESAR [*as if swallowing a pill*] He is somewhat younger. (55)

Although never appearing in person in the play, Antony exists in a ghostly shape both as an individual and a reminder of Shaw's despised romantic hero. Antony is clearly the subject of Cleopatra's thoughts and the proximity between him and Caesar – both are

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<sup>370</sup> On Caesar being awarded the *Corona Civica*, see Suetonius 2.



Romans, know each other and appear in Egypt to resolve a crisis in the kingdom – establishes Antony almost as a young alter ego of Caesar. Despite Shaw's attitude towards the cult status of such characters, product of the romantic tradition, one feels that his Caesar almost wishes to be one of them. Mentioning Antony's name always evokes a sigh from Julius, who is reminded of his own age.<sup>371</sup> The scene with Rufio and the dates I have already discussed is also centred on the problem of age – Rufio tells Caesar: 'When a man comes to your age, he runs down before his midday meal. Eat and drink; and then have another look at our chances' (76).

It is important that both Cleopatra's playful attitude towards Caesar's age and Rufio's almost filial criticism are willingly accepted by Caesar himself, who responds by challenging his ageing and those who remind him of the passage of time. As a contrast to Caesar's own moment of doubt and despair before eating the dates, Rufio also loses his certainty in the Roman power: whilst at the lighthouse, he becomes anxious of the imminent arrival of the Egyptians and thinks the whole campaign is at peril. This time it is for Caesar to encourage him:

CAESAR: [...] we two will reach the barricade from our end before the Egyptians reach it from their end – we two Rufio: I, the old man, and you, his biggest boy. And the old man will be there first. So peace; and give me some more dates (80).

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<sup>371</sup> Rufio's remark 'you a bad hand at a bargain, mistress, if you will swap Caesar for Antony' is taken by Carpenter (1969:190) to address the audience who preferred the romantic type of character, such as Antony. Couchman (1973: 94-6) describes the presence of Antony in the play as similar to a Wagnerian Leitmotif.

Once it becomes clear that the only means to escape from the lighthouse is to swim to safety, Caesar endorses Apollodorus' plan enthusiastically.<sup>372</sup> The idea of Caesar's swimming skills, prominently featured in ancient historiography, is pointedly reminiscent of Shakespeare's Caesar's alleged inability to swim, so gleefully revealed by partial Cassius. However, Shaw's character is not merely excited about the adventure, but he is also ready even to demonstrate his virility by carrying Cleopatra on his back like a dolphin. Indeed, later, to Apollodorus' poetic remark referring to Cleopatra that the general fished up a diamond in the sea, Caesar would reply that he had fished up a touch of rheumatism (100); nevertheless, this comic contrast to the heroic exploits from the previous act does not negate Caesar's successful attempt to prove that age could be challenged and conquered. When Achilles is first introduced to Caesar in Act II, Julius shows empathy: 'I am a general myself. But I began too old, too old' (42). Nevertheless, the glory of Caesar outweighs this almost rueful claim – he is the one to win the war.

The comic effect created by highlighting Caesar's regret for his ageing and then contrasting it to his youthful spirit is exemplary of his profound relationship with time, revealed in the conflict between universal time and Caesar's internal perception of it. Shaw's aim to confine great Caesar down to his human limits is demonstrated in the attention that the author pays to his character's ageing. Time does not stop and Caesar, like any other mortal being, must endure its passage. It may appear that Caesar's struggle to control time is here transformed in a struggle to remain young, and as a result he is destined to lose this last battle. However, this is not the case – by constantly reaffirming and exercising his youthful spirit, Caesar succeeds in subjecting his fifty-year-old body to

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<sup>372</sup> According to Dukore (1973:195), 'Apollodorus – as he appears in act III – is a significant means by which Shaw reveals Caesar to be advanced but neither absolutely unique nor godlike'.

sustain his energy. Thus he becomes a peculiar, ageless individual who can easily show childish amazement, youthful military zeal and mature reasoning.<sup>373</sup> This ageless spirit of Caesar becomes evident with his remark about what he expects to encounter upon his return to Rome: 'what has Rome to shew me that I have not seen already? One year in Rome is like another, except that I grow older, whilst the crowd in the Appian way is always the same age' (102). Indeed, Caesar's body may grow older, but his spirit experiences a process of transcending the temporal limitations of his age. Caesar is so different from the world that he inhabits that it appears that the world remains static whilst Caesar progresses in time/history. While the crowd in the Appian way will forever remain trapped in its own time, Shaw's general is a time traveller – he comes from the Late Republic, has reached the future, but has been driven back to a unidentified theatrical 'present' of Shaw's Alexandria, conflating ages into stage reality.

The superhuman alienation of Caesar allies him with Ra and the sphinx – creatures/gods who have seen many ages in the history of the world; this connection evokes an awareness of Caesar's own development as a historical personality. Therefore, although he may be ageing, Caesar's death is not nigh. His body will die and, since his attitude towards his future in Rome remains ambiguous, it may be assumed that he may even be expecting assassination; however, the true heroic spirit of Caesar will transcend its age and exist in posterity. This almost independent existence of body and soul is the aspect of Shaw's character which is often referred to as a demonstration of Caesar being

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<sup>373</sup> The childish amazement is best revealed in Shaw's stage directions for Caesar's first appearance in the royal palace at Alexandria in act II: with 'kindly interest' Caesar 'looks at the scene which is new to him, with the frank curiosity of a child...' (41). Berst (1973) notes the comic fusion of mythical age (Caesar's association with the Sphinx), temporal age ('old gentleman'), spiritual maturity and youthful spirit in Caesar; by act V Caesar is the ageless conqueror (1973: 79-81).

ahead of his time.<sup>374</sup> Too perfect for his age, when he refers to the gods creating a race that would understand, we have a feeling that thanks to his natural greatness of mind Caesar has somehow been given a glimpse of that bright future. Another interesting example of Caesar's ability to transcend temporal boundaries is his recounting of the fate of Vercingetorix in Act II. Although not explicitly mentioned, the execution presumably took place during Caesar's triumph, an event which should have happened at least a year and a half after the action in Egypt. This is an important detail, which, given the general accuracy of Shaw's historical background, sheds new light on Caesar's relationship with time. Not unlike Ra's perception of time, who claims that 'the two thousand years that have past are to me [...] but a moment' (15), the general disregards ordinary flow of time and seems to have access to past or future events.

Furthermore, Caesar demonstrates that he has transcended temporality by subjecting his own age to playful histrionics. In Act IV, when Cleopatra's dinner is being set up, Caesar innocently remarks that this is the perfect occasion to celebrate his birthday; Rufio responds with his habitual sharpness:

RUFIO [*contemptuously*] Your Birthday! You always have a birthday when there is a pretty girl to be flattered or an ambassador to be conciliated. We had seven of them in ten months last year (94).

Rufio's statement shows the difficulty of unveiling the truth about Caesar's real age. Each birthday celebration appears purposely staged and the different people, taking

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<sup>374</sup> Valency (1973: 173): 'the world has not yet evolved to the point where anything like an optimal organization is possible...'; also Leary (1962: 52): 'a general who is a saint must live a tense life of compromise between matter and spirit'.

part in the festivities, depending on their knowledge and proximity to the Roman leader and his personal life, would obtain a varying knowledge of his real age. The visual signs of ageing may be there, but since no one really knows how old Caesar is, they also acquire certain theatrical appearance. The heightened sense of performativity is integral to the irrelevance of age for the character, whose spirit and will are capable of influencing the effects of the passage of time felt by his body.

So, Shaw's Caesar experiences an internalization of his relationship with time, exemplified by ageing, whilst simultaneously transcends universal time. His struggle to conquer his internal temporality elevates him on a higher level of consciousness and exemplifies Shaw's artistic aims – to subject the heroic to its human constraints yet nevertheless to elevate the spirit to superhuman dimensions. Internalizing Caesar's 'epic' experiences is set within the context of comedy, which also contributes to the creation of a more realistic and ironic character. Although Shaw seemingly re-models a well-known historical personage to embody his views on the heroic, these are very much consistent with Caesar's self-representation as benevolent and pragmatic person.

## **History/Autobiography/Authorship**

The established method of my study is to initiate an exploration of epic Caesar and his relationship with time and proceed to discuss the extent to which the character is revealed in specific theatrical/dramatic contexts. Accordingly, the first part of this chapter was dedicated to Shaw's concept of the heroic applied to the portrayal of Caesar and in particular his efficiency/speed, divine aspects/mercy, and his control of time/ageing. The

predominating aspects of Shavian philosophy related to these qualities are the notions of the superman, expressed in rejection of romanticism, amorality and intellectual superiority. The result is a protagonist, distinct from his predecessors, who retains and transforms the notions of Caesarean self-presentation into Shavian heroic qualities. The second part of the chapter focuses on another set of defining elements in Shaw's treatment of Caesar, also a reflection of the dramatist's concepts: Shaw as an author of history and the autobiographical elements possibly traceable in his depiction of Caesar. These two aspects determine a sophisticated relationship between author and protagonist and also reflect on the principles of Caesarean performative self-representation.

### **Shavian History**

Caesar's *Commentaries* have been decisive for the creation of the character 'Caesar' and its projection onto history resulting in the transformation of supreme subjectivity into objective reality. Although Lucan attempts to contest the power of Caesarean self-representation, he nevertheless proclaims his role as parallel to that of Caesar in the shaping of the history of the Civil War. Even though both Shakespeare and Chapman create a polemic out of the complex issue of Caesarean absolute power, neither dramatists attempt to dispute Caesarean version of history; moreover, they do not claim authority over re-writing that history. However, this is precisely what Shaw deliberates. In his comments on *Caesar and Cleopatra*, Shaw considers himself as an author of history who is in position to determine an equally valid historical representation of the

Roman general.<sup>375</sup> Shaw did not label his work as comedy – in the standard edition of his works, he gave *Caesar and Cleopatra* the subtitle ‘a History’; in the Mander and Mitchenson edition the subtitle appears as ‘a history in four acts’ and these authors reproduce a ‘day bill’, advertising the play with the subtitle ‘a chronicle play in five acts’.<sup>376</sup> Moreover, Shaw claims that history is a product of artistic creation. The playbill of the first professional production of the play (the copyright performance) in Newcastle listed Shaw’s historical sources; the playwright advised the critics to consult ‘Manetho and the Egyptian monuments, Herodotus, Diodorus, Strabo (book 17), Plutarch, Pomponius Mela, Pliny, Tacitus, Appian of Alexandria and, perhaps, Ammianus Marcellinus’.<sup>377</sup> Couchman (1973) notes the absence of influential authors, such as Lucan or Suetonius and the placing of Plutarch amongst the lesser known sources, as well as adding Caesar’s own *Gallic Wars* in a second list of sources recommended to the ordinary spectators. Shaw’s irony is further demonstrated by his remark in the playbill that the above writers have consulted their own imagination – the author has done the same.<sup>378</sup> The list of ancient sources is rightly seen as a joke by Couchman, who accepts the wide-spread opinion that Mommsen’s history should be taken as the only real source of Shaw’s work. Nevertheless, it seems unlikely that Shaw suppressed the negative

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<sup>375</sup> ‘[M]y own chief historical plays, Caesar and Cleopatra and St. Joan, are fully documented chronicle plays [...] [F]amiliarity with them would get a student safely through examination papers of their periods’ (Shaw’s introduction to *In the Good King Charles’ Golden Days* (Laurence and Leary 1993:464); Shaw maintained that history could be learned from *Caesar and Cleopatra* back in 1913 (in the *New Statesman*, quoted by Couchman 1973:123).

<sup>376</sup> The genre classification of the play is discussed by Couchman (1973:123).

<sup>377</sup> Couchman (1973: 53).

<sup>378</sup> Couchman (1973:53); Couchman pays attention to the possible specific influence of these works on the play – for example the Britons’ use of blue colours, noted by Britannus, are referred to in the *Gallic Wars* and by Pomponius Mela; Caesar’s reaction to the death of Pompey is similar to that of Plutarch’s Caesar; Couchman believes that Manetho, Herodotus and Diodorus should probably be regarded as providing general background information on Egypt. According to Valency (1973: 172), among the elements that demonstrate Shaw constructing his character solely on Mommsen’s account is that he omits Caesar’s epilepsy and negative qualities, and bypasses Plutarch’s characterization.

qualities of Caesar, because of ignorance of the primary sources, but rather that his admiration for Caesar was cultivated by Mommsen's work. The result is 'a monumental figure, redeemed from rigidity by his humor and his humanity'.<sup>379</sup> However, by his attitude towards historical sources, Shaw consciously engages with the debate of objectivity of history and in effect willingly subjects his own contribution to scrutiny.

Shaw does not only endorse subjectivity of historical representation, but also proclaims the necessity of connecting history with the present. In order to emphasize the unchanging state of the world, in the 1912 prologue Shaw's god Ra claims that the two thousand years between Caesar's time and our age of modernity, is merely a moment for him. The didactic purpose of history and drama is an important aspect of Shaw's artistic philosophy and is the key to understanding the anachronistic features of *Caesar and Cleopatra*. Historical narrative is constructed not as a remote and splendid world, but as relevant to the world of the audience containing 'jibes, seeming anachronisms, colloquial diction, and prosaic behaviour'.<sup>380</sup> Believing in the timeless aspects of historical events, Shaw writes: 'it is the business of the stage to make its figures more intelligible to themselves than they would be in real life; for by no other means can they be made intelligible to the audience'; '...the playgoer may reasonably ask to have historical events

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<sup>379</sup> Valency (1973:172). Valency criticises the play's lack of direct contact with classical sources and concludes that 'in comparison with its historical basis the situation depicted in *Caesar and Cleopatra* seems simple, reasonable, and relatively comprehensible. Perhaps this is its chief shortcoming as drama' (1973: 181). I believe such criticism is missing the point of creative interpretation of a legendary historical personage such as Caesar – the proximity to classical sources is as important as the logic which drives the dramatist to depart from them.

<sup>380</sup> Meisel (1963:373). Morgan (1972:240) observes the proximity of Shaw and Brecht in terms of anachronistic speech and diminishing of the characters' cultural otherness; Berst (1973:94) also acknowledges Shavian anachronisms as having validity to relate the past to the present, which is essentially the purpose of history; Whitman (1977:209) considers the Ra prologue as characterizing Caesar's role in history in Hegelian terms.



and persons presented to him in the light of his own time...'.<sup>381</sup> The endeavour to make historical people real by contemporizing them extends to the specific arrangement of the Ra prologue for each country the play was presented – in the Polish version, for example, it featured references to events in Polish history.<sup>382</sup> The anachronisms in the play range from topical references to contemporary events to modern manner of speech. For example, the slogan 'Egypt for the Egyptians' (46), raised by Ptolemy's courtiers as a reaction to the Roman intervention, refers to the recent British invasion of Egypt, a campaign which Shaw did not oppose but criticized the jingoistic reaction to it in Britain. Caesar's offer to grant Cyprus as a present to Cleopatra's younger brother is seen as allusion to Disraeli who had acquired it for England at the end of the Russo-Turkish war (1878). Fleeting references, such as Ftatateeta accusing Cleopatra of wanting to be 'what these Romans call a New Woman' (90) or the introduction of completely anachronistic characters, such as Britannus, emphasize Shaw's skill to combine ancient history with the contemporary.<sup>383</sup> Eliminating the distance between ancient Rome/Egypt and the present also aims to prevent the idealization of the past and its eventual subjection to the spell of romanticism. Situated in the anachronistic antiquity, Caesar's character invites various interpretations: he is the Mommsenite grand figure of history, the greatest Roman that has ever lived, but also a 'Victorian empire-builder' and a character reflecting the Renaissance vision of the perfect Roman general with his well-ordered soul and control over his appetites.<sup>384</sup> By advocating an appropriation of history in order to elucidate

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<sup>381</sup> Preface to *Saint Joan* (Laurence and Leary 1993:544); preface to *Three Plays for Puritans* (Laurence and Leary 1993: 82).

<sup>382</sup> Wisenthal (1988:106-7).

<sup>383</sup> On The British invasion of Egypt, reference to Disraeli, linguistic anachronisms and the characters of Britannus and Apollodorus, see Wisenthal (1988: 102-3); on the occupation of Egypt as provoking the Ra prologue and Shaw's reaction to the invasion, see Irvine (1949: 232).

<sup>384</sup> Valency (1973:173;180).

problems in the present, Shaw re-creates history but nevertheless does not restrict the reception of his Caesar; thus confirming his principle that history is a product of imagination. Since *Caesar and Cleopatra* requires elaborate naturalistic setting and costume, the direct outcomes of the ‘modernization’ of Caesar are his recognizable intellectual sophistication and his manner of speech. The latter in particular is conditioned by comedy: given Caesar’s lofty image as a great general of the antiquity, speaking in a manner familiar to the theatregoer instantly eliminates the distance between audience and character.<sup>385</sup>

Shaw’s concept of history as artistic interpretation and its construction as contemporary narrative is joined by another important aspect – the autobiographical element in the creation of Caesar. Critics generally agree that the character is ‘really Shaw’s valuation of himself at his best’.<sup>386</sup> The elements I focused on in the first part of the chapter – efficiency, rejection of revenge, pragmatism and belief in the intellectual potential – are detectable in Shaw’s personal worldviews. Although he does not aim to negate Caesarean history, Shaw’s belief is that validity of history is subject to interpretation and he is in position to offer such interpretation. Further to his tacit challenge to Caesarean authorship of history, the Shavian autobiographical elements detectable in the character establish the dramatist as a peculiar *hybristic* personification of

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<sup>385</sup> ‘The historical Caesar, as far as his instincts and passions are concerned, could very well represent the pinnacle of modern human development’ (Carpenter 1969: 172); Shaw ‘uses history to achieve specific effects in art, effects which are then turned back upon their historical sources in a curiously revealing light’ (Berst 1973: 93).

<sup>386</sup> May (1985:162). Caesar is ‘unpetty, unsensual, unvengeful’; ‘if [...] Caesar had been more healthily libidinous in the play he would have been more impressive as well as more authentic, but also quite unShavian’ (May 1985:164); ‘psychologically, Caesar is an idealized picture of Shaw in a toga’ (Irvine 1949:230); ‘Caesar’s sense of humour, his several masks, his contradictions, vanity, values, asceticism, and kindness are quite Shavian’ (Berst 1973:85); Hugo (1971:102) sees Caesar as ‘anti-heroic, anti-romantic hero, whose words and actions ridicule Victorian morality and the theatre which images it’. Adams (1975: 113) considers Caesar’s appreciation of the art of Apollodorus as a sign of Shaw the romantic.

Caesar himself. This relationship between author and character allows for analysis of Shaw's Caesar in terms of his attitude towards his own historical identity and authorship.

A key Caesarean feature is his ability to recognize the multiplicity of interpretations of his own persona, the inevitable fragmented and biased knowledge of his public image. The capability to transcend time enables him to acquire a view of the bigger picture, as it were, and to become self-conscious of his role in history. Thus he is in position to experiment with his own image and to examine the way his identity is perceived by other characters, and in particular by Cleopatra. Such behaviour is necessarily performative and in effect reveals complex existential issues.

As a characteristic device of the *Commentaries*, Caesar's self-referential use of the third person creates the alleged objectivity of the author, while simultaneously generating a compelling parallel reality, in which Caesar exists as a separate entity distinct from the author of the work. The powerful effect of the third person for Caesar's self-representation has been demonstrated in my analysis of his dramatic reception in the works of Shakespeare and Chapman. In *Caesar and Cleopatra*, Caesar's reference to himself in third person reaches a new level of theatricality. The introduction of the character in Act I consists of a web of meanings and allusions surrounding the issue of what it means to be 'Caesar'. Experimentation with the connotations of the name 'Caesar' begins in the first scene when Caesar meets Cleopatra, who is hiding at the Sphinx. For almost half of the act Caesar describes the Romans and their chief – Julius Caesar – thus effectively referring to himself in the third person. Cleopatra also believes she knows who (or what) Caesar is: 'His father was a tiger and his mother a burning mountain; and his nose is like an elephant's trunk [*Caesar involuntarily rubs his nose*]'

(30). Thus the girl queen vocalizes the myth of a monstrous foreign being seen through the eyes of childish superstition. This myth entails an interesting beastly aspect of Caesar, which is encouraged by him and serves as counterpart to his description of himself earlier when addressing the sphinx; the picture of the Roman legion conjured up by Bel Afris as ‘a man with one head, a thousand arms, and no religion’ (19) evokes an image from a bestiary and reinforces the representation of the Romans and their leader as supernatural and monstrous. In his dialogue with Cleopatra, Caesar repeatedly refers to ‘Caesar’ as to one who threatens to eat the child-queen and presents himself as the person who can teach her how to avoid being eaten; since ‘Caesar’ eats cats and girls, by becoming a woman and a queen, Cleopatra would save her life and of course, it is for the ‘old gentleman’ to instruct her in the ways of kingship. We are reminded of Caesar’s beastly aspect by the horrific sound of the Roman *bucina*, which, to Cleopatra’s horror, the stranger defines as ‘Caesar’s voice’.<sup>387</sup> Caesar’s next step is to show her his Roman nose thus making her realize his provenance. That Caesar and ‘Caesar’ is one and the same person is clear to us from the onset and so the protagonist uses his device of dramatic irony, allowing us to partake in his histrionics. It is only at the end of the act, already at her palace, when Cleopatra would realize the real identity of the ‘old gentleman’. Everyone – characters and audience alike – realize that the young queen would have a lot to learn – it is Caesar who is sitting on the throne when his army arrives.

The episode with Julius in disguise is rich in allusions to his image in historiography, for example, his passion for women; the general says: ‘He is easily

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<sup>387</sup> On the animal imagery in the play: Caesar is presented as combining the lion and the fox (Valency 1973: 174); Caesar is somewhat sphinxlike – he is described by Ptolemy as a lion and by Cleopatra – as a cat (Berst 1973: 89); the Romans are described as dog-like, the Egyptians – feline and snake-like (Crompton 1971:66); for an overview of animal allegories in the play, see Bielecka (2006).

deceived by women. Their eyes dazzle him; and he sees them not as they are, but as he wishes them to appear to him' (32). Such a statement creates the feeling that Shaw's Caesar is aware of his reception in posterity and is a possible demonstration of his ability to transcend temporality. This is also another layer of dramatic irony – this time highlighting the connection between Shaw and the audience, which leaves Caesar ignorant of the validity of the references about his relationships with women, made centuries after his death.

Although Act I presents a most complex vision of how Caesar creates and experiments with his public image, throughout the play he occasionally refers to himself in the third person, usually with a clearly comic or ironic self-referential intention. A good example is his reaction to the number of Cleopatra's female attendants: 'Three are enough. Poor Caesar generally has to dress himself' (37). When, in Act III, Apollodorus brings the 'gift' for Caesar – Cleopatra rolled in a carpet – Caesar orders him to go back, as this is no time for presents from the Queen.<sup>388</sup> Apollodorus replies that this is impossible because 'As I approached the lighthouse, some fool threw a great lethern bag into the sea. It broke the nose of my boat;' Caesar replies: 'I am sorry, Apollodorus. The fool shall be rebuked' (79). Of course, the audience, and Caesar himself, knows that a minute ago, as an expression of his leniency and unwillingness to know the names of his enemies, Caesar had thrown into the sea the bag containing vital information – the correspondence between Pompey and the occupation troops in Egypt. The scene contains a subtle and equally comic demonstration of Caesarean third person 'device' – this time,

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<sup>388</sup> Whiting (1960) pays attention to the fact that since the carpet scene is not mentioned in Mommsen, Shaw has consulted Plutarch; however, another possible source is Gerome's famous painting 'Cleopatre apportee a Cesar dans un tapis', exhibited at the royal academy in 1871; although Shaw arrived in London in 1876, Whiting claims it is possible that he knew Gerome's work.

the name of Caesar equals that of a fool; Apollodorus remains ignorant of the joke, but Caesar and the audience know the truth. The kaleidoscope of meanings of the use of 'Caesar' includes more serious instances from the 'quotable' Caesarean lore, such as his advice to Cleopatra: 'Cast out fear; and you will conquer Caesar' (37); an even stronger statement is reminiscent of Caesarean epigrammatic sayings in Suetonius: '[...]Caesar is no Caesarian. Were Rome a true republic, then were Caesar the first of Republicans' (51). These utterances balance the comedy of self-representation and produce an effective echo of the image of the traditionally more solemn historical character.

The use of the third person in Shaw is more relevant to Caesarean self-representation than any of the other dramatic works considered in my study. Shakespeare and Chapman have different agendas in constructing their characters' projection of 'Caesar' which is strongly related to performativity – in Shakespeare it is the acceptance of the role given by the conspirators, and in Chapman – the performance of mercy. The absence of a connection between performance and mercy in Shaw's Caesar has already been examined. Nevertheless, his use of third person implies a performative mode and, as it becomes evident in act I, Caesar engages in performing a role – that of the anonymous stranger. However, underneath his playful experiment with personalities there remains a fundamental problem of representation and interpretation of history and its relationship with the performance of identities. Unlike Shakespeare whose Caesar loses himself in his performative self, as it were, Shaw's Caesar is theatrical insofar as he experiments with his public image and the use of third person. The polarity of character, which I have identified as a sign of Caesar's inherent performativity in ancient historiography, remains a self-defining feature of Shaw's protagonist, but takes the peculiar shape of inability to

discern reality from dream. An effect of Caesar's conscious acceptance of the multiplicity of personalities and the ability to see the big picture of the world's history is that he loses his awareness of reality. Shaw creates a character of such greatness who, not unlike Pirandello's *Six Characters in Search of an Author*, is elevated to a position of self-assessment as a historical *character*. A weary traveller, Caesar has journeyed through time and upon his reaching Shaw's Alexandria, his perception of reality has achieved truly superhuman dimensions. Earlier in this chapter I argued that the unique contribution of the play for the reception of Caesar is that Shaw's character is the first to internalize his 'epic' experience. Such an interpretation stands in direct opposition to Shakespeare's Caesar, for example, who does not reflect on his state of mind and actions. In other dramatic works, Caesarean monologues usually recount his victories and sometimes serve as vocalization of his *hybris*.

As a contrast, Shaw's Caesar talks about himself, he is honest about his anxieties and in effect becomes ironic. His monologue, spoken upon his first appearance as an address to the Sphinx, is crucial for the understanding of Caesar's character. Alone in the desert at night, he says: '[I]n the little world yonder, Sphinx, my place is as high as yours in this great desert'; (27) although constructed as a speech of comic *hybris*, in fact Caesar sees himself as a creature, whose exceptionality consists of power, which has caused his alienation from the world. The general describes himself as someone who is 'dazzled', 'confused' and 'darkened' – someone who has lost touch with his origins, the 'lost region' (*ibid.*). Aware of his role in history, Shaw's Caesar has reached a state, indeed a superhuman state, in which his consciousness can encompass all his reincarnations. This causes a profound crisis of identity, which makes him exclaim that he is 'stranger to the

race of men' (28); he says: 'Rome is a madman's dream: this is my Reality' (*ibid.*). But what is 'this' reality – is it the desert, night, Egypt, or the stage? Who is the madman who dreams the dream of Rome – is it not Caesar himself who had created a dream-reality continuum with his works and deeds in Rome?

Contextualized, Caesar's speech leads to his dialogue with Cleopatra and the ensuing comic situation brings Caesar's self-assessed greatness down to earth – an example of Shaw's aims to re-define heroism. At first Caesar hears the sphinx 'speak' to him with a girl's voice addressing him in the most preposterous way: 'Old gentleman: don't run away' (28). Naturally, this provokes Caesar's comic indignation: '...This! To Julius Caesar!' (*ibid.*), followed by: 'Sphinx: you presume on your centuries. I am younger than you, though your voice is but a girl's voice as yet'. Caesar's reaction, so distinct from the lofty speech we have just heard, sets the comic tone of the scene. However, even when realizing that it is a girl who presents herself as the Queen of Egypt whose voice he had heard, Julius struggles to remain in his dream: '...What a magnificent dream! Only let me not awake, and I will conquer ten continents to pay for dreaming it out to the end' (29). The second blow to Caesar's confidence in his dream comes with the realization brought by the girl that what he thought was the Great sphinx is in fact 'only a dear little kitten of a Sphinx.' Finally, Cleopatra, insisting on his realization that this is not a dream, jabs a pin into his arm bringing Caesar to a state of quiet panic: '...no: impossible: madness, madness! [*Desperately*] Back to camp – to camp' (31). The Roman camp appears as the only place which can offer safety; Rome, the madman's dream, becomes the reality and the Egyptian desert – an unnerving



dream.<sup>389</sup> However, later in the play, in act IV, the feeling that Caesar wishes to escape his Roman reality re-emerges as he deplores his Roman way of life – ‘the tedious, brutal life of action’ (95) and expresses favour for Apollodorus’ life of an artist – ‘one with wit and imagination enough to live without continually doing something!’ (*ibid.*) The world of imagination is the ideal state of Caesar’s mind and the oscillation between believing what is real and what a dream, defines Shavian Caesar’s perception of the world to which he feels a stranger. Even though the cognitive confusion seems to diminish as the action of the play progresses, the continuous necessity to balance between speed and delay and the contrast between what Caesar accepts as rational but appears illogical to other characters (for example, mercy) signify his different level of perception of his environment.

The dream-reality issue is also revealed in the contrast between Caesarean speeches, often on the verge of preaching, and his actions. Once again it is Rufio who criticizes Caesar for his lengthy sermons which do not correspond to the reality of his actions. An example of such ‘Don Quixotean’ talk is his daydreaming during the dinner in act IV: to his grand plans for reaching the sources of the Nile and founding a city there, Rufio comments: ‘he will conquer Africa with two legions before we come to the roast boar’ (102).<sup>390</sup> In Act II, when Caesar advises Ptolemy: ‘Always take a throne when it is offered to you’ (45), our retrospective knowledge that Caesar himself would not accept the throne at the Lupercalia helps us to grasp Shaw’s attitude towards the lessons of

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<sup>389</sup> The dream-like quality of act I and Caesar’s reluctance to let go of his romantic illusions even when Cleopatra jabs a pin into his arm is noted by Bertolini (1981: 332-333).

<sup>390</sup> Caesar’s discrepancy between words and actions supports the conventional belief, encouraged by Shaw himself, that Shakespeare is dramatist of action and Shaw – of argument (Leech 1971:91). Caesar shows interest in the sources of the Nile in Lucan (10.191-2); however, the idea of founding a city there is distinctively Shavian.

history and his character's inability to relate his thoughts to his own actions. Rufio – the agent of pragmatism and reason – instantly relates Caesar's words to life in Rome; he remarks: 'I hope you will have the good sense to follow your own advice when we return to Rome' (*ibid.*).<sup>391</sup>

Caesar also reflects on being an author: when in Act II, Theodotus rushes in the palace, horrified by the burning of the library and the imminent loss of the world's knowledge, the general replies: 'I am an author myself; and I tell you it is better that the Egyptians should live their lives than dream them away with the help of books' (59). Clearly such an utterance could be taken to demonstrate Shaw's reaction against romantic literature, his call to arms against the immersion in unrealistic and idealistic narratives. However, when Caesar is set within the framework of his development in history, epic and drama, this emerges as a poignant statement, saturated with irony. It is another manifestation of Caesarean discrepancy between talking and acting since his life is conditioned by written works and the established image of the glorious general depends on the survival of these works in posterity.

The discrepancy between talking and acting and the overarching inability to discern between the notions of dream and reality reveal the complexity of Caesar's experiences as an author of history prompted by Shaw's own ideas of historical authorship and the validity of subjective views on history. Thus Rufio's criticism of his general's verbosity which would either not lead to action, or would not correspond to it reflects on the parallel world created by Caesar in his writings. The issue is not the legitimacy of words or actions, but the awareness of the multiple realities an author

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<sup>391</sup> In the realm of fantasy Caesar is victorious; 'however, the perspective of history counterbalances the fantasy with tragic irony' (Berst 1973: 95).

creating works of self-representation exists in. The worlds of Shaw's Caesar the author are not false or consciously manipulative, the latter clearly being more suitable to describe historical Caesar's agitprop. The dream world of Shaw's Caesar is the reality of his authorial imagination, which often clashes with other people's reality. This conflict is the outcome of the process of constructing oneself as a separate entity – a character in history – which alters the self's perception of reality. When Caesar is carried away in his speeches, this is the author Caesar experiencing epiphanies of philosophical and moral reasoning in the realm of impossible conquests and ageless life.<sup>392</sup> He seeks his dream world, which would not only make him feel safe, but would allow for the amoral, natural impulses to become the norm of governing the world. However, Alexandria and its royal court are incapable of comprehending Caesar's mind and its messages – even Cleopatra's maturity will diminish when not under the direct influence of the general.<sup>393</sup> The ending of the play carries a peculiar sense of displacement and fragility of Caesarean achievement signifying that despite his ardent rejection of romanticism Shaw experiences a deeply emotional and potentially romantic connection to heroism.<sup>394</sup> This should not necessarily betray a flaw in the consistency of Shaw's philosophy; in fact the dramatist's infatuation with the notion of Superman whilst depicting a hero, prone to human

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<sup>392</sup> Gibbs (1983: 114-5) rightly identifies the real tension in the play – it is between Caesar's realism and his 'consciousness of the eternal'.

<sup>393</sup> 'The potential social impact of the exceptional person is thwarted because ordinary humanity cannot be ennobled from without' (Turco 1976: 106); according to Berst (1973: 92), Cleopatra's instincts cannot be changed – she learns to control her cruelty, but not to banish it; nobility of mind is of no avail...thus the play 'evolves in pessimistic terms'. Adams (1975: 82) also believes that the world of Cleopatra is not ready for Caesar, the world saviour.

<sup>394</sup> Bentley defines Shavian naturalistic comedy as romantic (2010:155); Wilson (1969:157) also considers Caesar as a romantic character – driven from one country to another in search for 'the lost regions from which my birth into this world exiled me', he is closer to Yeats than to Mommsen or Plutarch. Couchman (1973) sees signs of romanticism in Shaw; however, 'It is the comic sense in Shaw that seizes with equal glee on the possibilities in Shakespeare and Mommsen, turning the talismanic names into a fascinating new sorcery, perhaps purging the playwright himself, through laughter, of his own inveterate hero-worship while laughing the Bardolaters off the stage' (1973: 166).

limitations is an adequate response to the exceptional position of Caesar as cultural icon – mythologized, yet constantly challenging definitive interpretation.

The aim of the investigation of this last case study in my thesis was to reveal the transformation of the qualities of Caesarean self-representation into elements of the Shavian depiction of the character, conditioned by his interest in the idea of the Superman, amorality, and the writing of history as creative process. In his life in the *Commentaries* and his afterlife in history, epic and drama Caesar is presented as unrevealing his inner self (e.g Shakespeare) or consciously projecting himself in a virtual, theatrical reality. Shaw, with his strong philosophical background, investigates Caesar's psyche and by boldly appropriating the role of history-maker and infusing the character with internal motives and ruminations, re-defines the very basis of Caesarean image, founded on externalization and performativity.

## Conclusion

The research question set in the beginning of this study was to determine the extent to which specific elements of Julius Caesar's self-representation, including themes and characterization, have been transmitted to his subsequent representation in epic and drama. To this end, I explored the potential of the *Commentaries* for influencing the reception of Caesar and engaged in a transhistorical evaluation of Caesar's development from a historical person to epic and dramatic character.

In my view, Caesar's self-representation can be considered as a fusion of interrelated epic and dramatic aspects, defining Caesar's identity as protagonist and his relationship with his audience and environment. After setting the groundwork of the study with analysis of Caesar's *Commentaries*, I investigated the process of transmutation of these elements in a chapter on Caesar's depiction in ancient historiography and four case studies – Lucan's epic *Civil War*, Shakespeare's *Julius Caesar*, George Chapman's *The Tragedy of Caesar and Pompey* and Bernard Shaw's *Caesar and Cleopatra*. Although the epic-dramatic image of Caesar is subject to transformation, with new interconnections established in each case study, the terms first introduced in the discussion of the *Commentaries* are applied throughout the thesis. Thus each specific work is assessed in the light of the epic progression, the notion of performativity and its interpretation of Caesarean reality.

The epic progression is distinguished in Caesar's self-representation in the *Commentaries*: it is initiated by the general's exceptional speed, revealed in numerous examples in which his celerity proves decisive for his victory; the progression leads to a

sense of Caesarean omnipresence, which may be defined as quasi-divine, since Caesar remains mortal and subject to temporality, but is able to elevate himself to a superior vantage point. The ability to transcend spatial and temporal boundaries through speed is also expressed as certain ability to personify time; this is signalled by heightened interest in the measurement of time and is associated with confronting Roman temporality with indigenous timelessness of barbarian peoples, particularly in the *Gallic War*. The dramaturgical elements evident in the *Commentaries* are *hybris* and *peripeteia*: the former is embodied by enemies or in some cases, by reckless Caesareans, positioned away from their commander; *peripeteia* is brought by Caesar, whose presence transforms the peril into victory. Performativity in Caesar's works is expressed in the notions of tactical disguising, the awareness of the gaze of the soldiers observing each other and the general observing the theatre of war; speeches, both *oratio obliqua* and *oratio recta*, are important for the performative self-depiction of Caesar and his portrayal of the enemy. Consequently, the overall impression of dramatic Caesar is benevolent and expedient leader, whereas his enemies display excessive anger and disorganization.

Lucan's *Civil War* is seen as an important precursor for the dramatic representation of Caesar and a counterpart to the *Commentaries*. Composed during the reign of Nero, it is a fierce critique of the Civil War and Caesar's authority as a leader and politician. Although Caesar's speed of action is manifested, it is triggered by the extreme passion of *furor*, which helps Caesar to attain control over time and space, the latter personified by Pompey's vast territorial resources. I argue that although all Caesarean assets are aptly demonized by Lucan, the poet's negative image of Caesar, albeit a reaction against his personal propaganda nevertheless reveals his overwhelming

charisma as a cultural icon. Lucan elevates Caesar to demonic *hybristic* heights in order to denounce him in an authorial *aristeia*, as it were, in which the poet contests his right to influence historical reality conditioned by Caesar. This chapter illustrates how the Caesarean epic image acquires a distinctive impulse for global domination, both appealing and demonic, which inevitably influences his Renaissance reception.

The chapter on ancient historiography investigates the process of re-invention and interpretation which marks Caesar's evolution from an author of written documents through Lucanian embodiment of *hybris* into a historical personality. The works by the major contributors to the Caesarean tradition, including Caesar's continuators and authors of the *Alexandrian*, *African* and *Spanish* wars, are considered. The aim is to situate Caesar within his political and social milieu and, appropriately, the relationship between Caesar and his environment is seen in the light of his epic-dramatic characterization. I consider events not described in the *Commentaries*, such as Caesar's relationship with Cleopatra and his five triumphal processions, conducted after the end of the Civil war. The chapter also explores Caesar's image as a blend of contradicting qualities, such as power and frailty, masculinity and femininity; I propose a treatment of this characteristic duality as related to the inherent performativity of Caesar, which defines his behaviour within the theatricalized Late Republican political context. A significant part of the chapter is dedicated to Caesar's death, an event with immense importance for his reception. Caesar's assassination is viewed as the result of the confrontation between Caesarean reality and the Senatorial attempt to construct a rival reality in which Caesar is granted extraordinary honours in order to provoke resentment. However, by disregarding

his safety, Caesar subjects himself to the conspiracy; his death becomes a performative act which adds a tragic flair to his image.

Tragic Caesar reveals his full potential in my first case study – Shakespeare’s *Julius Caesar*. In the introduction, I noted the importance of Shakespeare’s play for the dissemination of political agenda through the character of Caesar, whose totalitarian-to-be presence is opposed to the republican values of Brutus. My treatment of the tragedy is apolitical, partly because my analysis of Caesar seeks to evaluate him as a character in terms of his epic-dramatic identity and not as a political allegory. The subject of the play, Caesar’s assassination, is naturally derived from historiography and reflects the problem of conflicting realities of Caesar and his enemies discussed in the preceding chapter. Caesarean performativity acquires new meta-theatrical dimensions – supported by his self-referential use of the third person, Caesar performs self-proclaimed constancy and indifference, but his behaviour demonstrates irrationality, which betrays association with Lucanian Caesar’s *furor*. This underlying emotionality is revealed after Caesar’s death through the havoc instigated by Antony and Octavian, whose revenge against the conspirators secures the historical supremacy of Caesar’s spirit. Albeit inconspicuous, the notion of Caesarean speed may be also detected as part of this irrational conduct – Caesar’s ultimate determination to go to the Senate on the Ides of March is a tragically unstoppable impulse.

Despite taking some liberties with historical chronology, George Chapman’s *The Tragedy of Caesar and Pompey* presents a protagonist, more closely related to the portrayal of Caesar in ancient historiography. Depicting events from the Civil War, the play focuses on Caesar’s victory at Pharsalus, which is contrasted to what may be seen as



the moral victory of the Stoic Cato – Caesar’s ideological enemy – who commits suicide moments before Caesar’s arrival in Africa. An important aspect of the play is the attitude towards Caesar’s speed: Caesar appears too late to pardon Cato, Chapman thus compromising the general’s celerity as a notion, generally sustained by Lucan and historiography. As a result, Caesarean omnipresence and control of temporality become questionable. Chapman also generates a discrepancy between Caesar’s depiction by other characters – notably Cato – as a ruthless Machiavel, and his self-critical and benevolent behaviour demonstrated throughout the play. Therefore, Caesar is constructed as an ambivalent character whose complexity is generated by the discrepancy between description and real appearance, a distinction seen as related to Caesar’s performativity. Once again exemplified by his self-referential use of the third person, in this case performativity is associated with the demonstration of Caesar’s *clementia*. By recognizing the flexibility of Caesar’s character, Chapman’s depiction of his protagonist evokes a certain humanistic appeal, casting a shadow over the playwright’s alleged sympathy for Cato and his affiliation with Stoicism.

The action of Bernard Shaw’s *Caesar and Cleopatra* takes place in Alexandria – beginning with Caesar’s arrival and meeting with the young queen, the play depicts the conflict between the Romans and Egyptians and concludes with Caesar’s departure for Rome. Despite the subject matter, known as a sexual affair with heavy political implications, Shaw notably constructs a tutor-disciple (albeit betraying some sexual innuendo) relationship between the Roman general and Cleopatra, whose age in this case is reduced to sixteen (she was twenty-one, according to historical accounts). It is important that Shaw grants his protagonist the unique ability for self-assessment as a

historical character, which influences Caesar's epic-dramatic nature. The notion of Caesar's superior speed is sustained but his control of time is distinctively internalized as Caesar's struggles against his own, individual passage of time – ageing. Nevertheless, the general proves the power of his youthful spirit and his transcendence of personal temporality is related to the idea of quasi-divinity, also undergoing a process of internalization. Caesar's internal experience of quasi-divinity is one of feeling different and somewhat out of place in the world he inhabits. An aspect of this feeling of difference is that his habitual *clementia* is connected to superhuman resistance to the impulse for revenge while also problematically allowing for the impartial concept of 'natural', that is, not ideologically justified, murder. Unlike Chapman's protagonist, Shaw's Caesar does not engage in a performance of mercy. His performativity can be found in the experiments he conducts with his own image – for example, in his first meeting with Cleopatra, Caesar pretends to be someone else and discusses 'Caesar' with the queen. This play-within-a play, which also utilizes the self-referential use of third person, is considered as another indication of Caesar's awareness of his own representational value as a historical character.

In the introduction, I pointed out that the scope of this thesis is wide, because it deals with variety of works produced in different periods but it is also specific, since it is situated within a distinctive, Caesarean, context. Consequently, if ontology of the reception of epic-dramatic Caesar is to be defined, it should be founded on the premise that his evolution as a character entails an understanding that his existence as historical personality is indivisible from the concept of Caesarean reality. Since Caesar's self-

representation is integral to the foundation of this reality, its exploration emerges as an indispensable aspect of the reception of Julius Caesar in history, epic and drama.

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